



on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council
6th Annual Kelly Ballard Strategy Visit
to Grow



HELLO@KELLYBALLARD.CO.UK

 @KELLYINBRISTOL

KELLYBALLARD.CO.UK



5-Year strategy to grow Cheltenham’s visitor economy

Table of Contents

1.	Context	5
2.	Executive summary.....	6
2.1	Where do we want to be in 2022?	6
2.2	Where are we in 2017?	7
2.3	How are we going to achieve our goals? Our action plan.....	8
3.	Where do we want to be in 2022?	9
3.1	The Vision.....	9
3.2	Strategic aims and outcomes	9
3.2.1	Working environment.....	10
3.2.2	Working partnerships	10
3.2.3	Product development.....	10
3.2.4	Market development.....	11
4.	Where are we in 2017?	11
4.1	What is the proposition and what makes Cheltenham distinct amongst its competitors?.....	11
4.2	Visitor statistics and information	13
4.2.1	Resident population (leisure day visitors).....	14
4.2.2	Day visitors (more than three hours).....	14
4.2.3	Tourists – domestic visitors	14



4.2.4	Tourists – overseas visitors	15
4.2.5	Business tourism	16
4.2.6	Festival visitors	17
4.2.7	National trends.....	17
4.3	What do visitors think of Cheltenham?	18
4.4	Branding.....	19
4.4.1	The Cheltenham brand	19
4.4.2	The importance of the Cotswolds brand to Cheltenham	20
4.5	Where are the product issues/gaps and opportunities?	22
4.5.1	The visitor peaks and troughs of the year	22
4.5.2	Visitors making the most of Cheltenham.....	23
4.5.3	Appealing to young people.....	23
4.5.4	Understanding the business tourism/MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events) product and market	24
5.	How are we going to achieve our goals?	25
5.1	The action plan.....	25
5.1.1	Working environment.....	25
5.1.2	Working partnerships.....	26
5.1.3	Product development.....	27
5.1.4	Market development.....	29
5.2	Annual plans.....	32
5.3	Budget and resource.....	36
5.4	Monitoring and reporting – regular monitoring and annual reporting	38



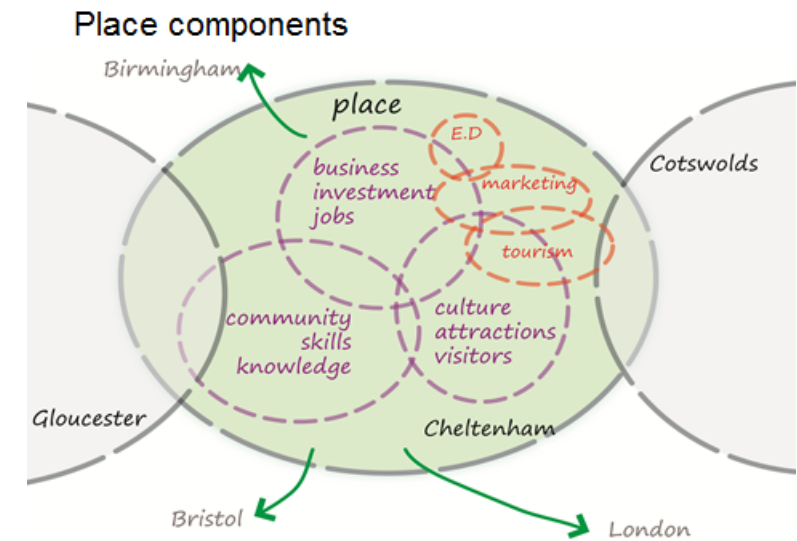
Appendix 1: Key opportunities for working with the Cotswolds brand and Cotswolds Tourism.....39

1. Context

The 5 Year Strategy to Grow Cheltenham's Visitor Economy sits within the context of Cheltenham's wider Place Strategy.

Cheltenham's future prosperity depends on a number of different, interconnecting elements, the town's place within the region and its connections further afield.

The Place Strategy seeks to make the most of what the town has to offer for residents, visitors and those who work here and sets out the overall shared vision for the town.



The 5 Year Strategy to Grow Cheltenham's Visitor Economy sets out the framework and steps for building a thriving visitor economy which, in simple terms, is about encouraging more visitors to visit more of the time and stay longer. This, in turn, will support the wider marketing of the town, economic growth – new jobs, business creation – and culture.

The information contained in this document builds upon the strategic plan entitled 'A strategic tourism outcomes proposition for Cheltenham' produced by Creative Tourist Consults, which was commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council in 2015. This document also draws upon further research that has

become available since the outcomes proposition document was commissioned.

In order to avoid the commissioning of several strategic documents which would overlap, this document will operate as a Destination



Management Plan, Tourism Strategy and Marketing Strategy to support the growth of Cheltenham's visitor economy.

2. Executive summary

This strategy sets out an ambitious but achievable approach for the visitor economy in Cheltenham for the period June 2017-2022.

This document is broken down into three sections:

1. Where do we want to be in 2022? **Our vision, aims and objectives**
2. Where are we in 2017? **The current situation**
3. How are we going to achieve our goals? **Our action plan**

In summary:

1.1 Where do we want to be in 2022?

The ambition for growth. The next five years are about putting the resources back in to support and grow Cheltenham's visitor economy by 5% year-on-year from 2019 - 2022¹. We will increase the interest in Cheltenham, significantly driving up visitors and engagement to visitcheltenham.com and associated digital platforms. We will grow the number of repeat visits from regional day visitors, grow new and repeat overnight trips as well as encourage increased length of stays.

In partnership. We will have a highly-engaged visitor economy sector within Cheltenham with businesses working together to create a great experience and contributing to a central marketing service for the good of their business and the town as a whole. Cheltenham will have a strong presence with the Cotswolds marketing offer and we will be working proactively in collaboration with surrounding destinations to encourage visitors into the region.

A distinctive and appealing brand and proposition. We will tackle the indifferent image that people have of Cheltenham. The town will once again have a clear, unified brand and a clear 'sense of place' which internal and external partners understand. We will be working towards

¹ In line with VisitBritain prediction of growth for UK tourism.



developing product that aligns with our brand and unique proposition and Cheltenham's status will be elevated as a must-visit destination. All content will be presented around a core tourism digital platform linked to visitCheltenham.com.

1.2 Where are we in 2017?

About the visitors. Tourism is worth over £154 million to Cheltenham² and this has remained pretty static over the past ten years. Day visitors and staying visitors have grown; however, the amount they are spending is declining. There is also a decrease in overseas visitors. This is against a national picture of growth both in the number of domestic short-breaks and overseas holiday makers to the UK. Research has told us that people are indifferent about what Cheltenham has to offer – the perception is that if you're not going to the races, there is little else on offer. On the positive, they are not against visiting, there are simply other destinations that present themselves as more appealing. Unless positive action is taken then Cheltenham is highly likely to lose its market share as other destinations continue to invest in their product and marketing effort.

Our unique proposition. Cheltenham is regarded as 'the most complete Regency town in the UK'; in a competitive market place this, and the ambience it exudes, is Cheltenham's most distinct and unique selling point. This is also a great opportunity to pursue World Heritage status. The independent food and drink sector is outstanding, there's a great shopping offer for a town of its size – particularly the independent sector – and there is a diverse programme of events and festivals that give people reasons to visit every week of the year. Our racing calendar is world-class and some of our key festivals are the envy of some of the most dynamic cultural cities. Added to this is a vibrant culture led by many independent businesses and individuals who are creative and passionate about the town. Although currently intangible in the visitor sense, the mystique that surrounds GCHQ and the town's relationship with the intelligence community is interwoven into Cheltenham. Coupled with the expected growth of the cutting-edge cyber security industry this provides Cheltenham with an element of intrigue and is another potential opportunity for product development.

Current tourism support and collaboration. The current tourism service is under-resourced both in terms of marketing, industry support and visitor information. The visitor economy consists of hundreds of businesses, yet very few are engaged in a collaborative approach. This is changing with the work of the Cheltenham BID however this covers only the town centre and not the whole town. There are several groups

² 2015 Volume and Value Survey, South West Research Company



that exist as tourism related membership organisations including the Chamber of Commerce and the Cheltenham Hospitality Association and they provide basic tourism support and networking opportunities within the town; however, they do little, if any, external marketing. Externally Cheltenham has not had the resources to work with and develop fruitful partnerships. The Cotswolds brand presents a great opportunity, yet few businesses are engaged in collaborative marketing to visitors coming to the area.

1.3 How are we going to achieve our goals? Our action plan

Capitalise on what we've got. Through a proactive marketing approach we will bring people together to tackle the visitor indifference. We will highlight our unique proposition and develop authentic experiences, reasons to visit and bookable product around the Regency, food and drink and cultural offer.

Tourist Information Service. We shall look at the current tourist information centre as a high priority project, considering how it can be developed physically, digitally and virtually along with the financial business model to support it. The solution for this needs careful consideration and further time to explore the options, as its personnel are currently shared with The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum.

A distinctive brand and proposition. We will re-establish a clear, unified brand for Cheltenham and work with the Place Strategy to develop a clear 'sense of place'. We will explore development of the town as a World Heritage site or a 'city' – giving it the status that it deserves.

In partnership. We will create an effective, sustainable public/private partnership business model that makes a step change in the positive promotion of Cheltenham and support for the visitor economy. We will create regular communication and networking opportunities to get the sector talking and working together. Working with the Cheltenham BID, the Chamber of Commerce and other key partners, we will create regular communication and networking opportunities to get the sector talking and working together. We will establish a combined membership and a linked, dynamic, digital presence with Cotswolds Tourism to ensure Cheltenham's businesses benefit from the millions of people who visit the Cotswolds each year. We will work in partnership with Cotswolds Tourism to develop the Cotswolds brand nationally and internationally.

Resources. For year one, a small team of experienced, self-employed tourism personnel will be recruited to lead and deliver a Transitional Marketing Service. Once the service and membership is established and reviewed movement to a more permanent structure can begin.



Budget. Total expenditure for year one will be in the region of £159,500. This will be supported by funding from Cheltenham Borough Council, the Cheltenham BID and several key businesses within the visitor economy including The Jockey Club. A membership scheme will be created to generate additional income from smaller organisations. This will provide a significant injection of funds into a focused marketing vehicle and visitor offer, supported and owned by a much wider group of stakeholders.

With a shared vision and clear leadership delivered through a model that works for the town as a whole, Cheltenham can once again become an exciting place to visit as it once was in its heyday.

3. Where do we want to be in 2022?

1.4 The Vision

The long term vision for Cheltenham is ‘**a place where everyone thrives**’.

A vision for the visitor economy:

Cheltenham aspires to be one of the UK’s most liveable towns, with residents and visitors inspired by its culture, food, public spaces, education and the diversity and quality of accessible experiences. It is about a more integrated year-round visitor offer; a unified presentation of Cheltenham as a distinctive, contemporary place; and more effective delivery partnerships can help Cheltenham realise its ambitions to become a highly competitive pre-eminent tourism destination drawing in visitors, talent and would-be investors³.

The next five years are about putting the basics back in to support the visitor economy. To develop an effective public/private partnership service that makes a step change in the positive promotion of Cheltenham. To create an environment where people are working to establish the future **together** – not as silos. To create and deliver a unified message giving Cheltenham back its strong, identifiable, sense of place.

³ The visitor economy Vision has been taken from the Outcomes Proposition by Creative Tourist on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council and the Tourism Partnership

1.5 Strategic aims and outcomes

This strategy aims to **grow Cheltenham's tourism economy by 5% year-on-year from 2019**. This allows two years of developing the partnerships and infrastructure which will enable the strategy to thrive. This aim is in line with the national tourism growth rate.

The **outcomes** are outlined within four areas: Working Environment, Working Partnership, Product Development and Market Development.

1.5.1 Working environment

Cheltenham's visitor economy is strategically and sustainably supported

1. **Strong leadership** – taking forward the strategy, focusing and coordinating delivery of growth in the visitor economy
2. **New income streams** – contributions from both public and private organisations to ensure this strategy can be sustained long-term

1.5.2 Working partnerships

Partnerships are active and dynamic in driving the vision and delivery for tourism in Cheltenham

1. **New business model** – more effective and dynamic partnership working supporting business needs and operating as a centralised destination marketing operation
2. **Proactive partnership collaboration** – more proactive and engaged relationships with others regionally, in particular Cotswolds Tourism, to maximise the attractiveness as a destination

1.5.3 Product development

Cheltenham's product offer is refined and enhanced for visitor requirements

1. **Support and guidance for current and new visitor economy investments** – growth in the appropriate product offer and quality standards. Development of tourism enterprises to suit market need. A service that becomes a first port of call for those in the visitor economy needing help and advice
2. **New visitor welcome** – a tourist information service which is virtually, digitally and physically accessible



3. **New experiences** – a new way of enjoying ‘authentic’ Cheltenham is available and being presented

1.5.4 Market development

Growth of the visitor economy through marketing communications programmes and systems

1. **New perspectives** – presenting strong reasons for our target markets to choose Cheltenham – regionally, nationally and internationally
2. **Development of owned marketing channels** – refreshing or redesigning digital channels and print marketing collateral to adapt to the needs of our target markets
3. **New image** – a distinct, contemporary brand for Cheltenham is adopted and championed utilising new video and images to create positive perceptions of Cheltenham
4. **New engagement** – increased content development and relationships with influencers through which to reach visitors
5. **New insights** – creation of benchmarking and market research to monitor success

4. Where are we in 2017?

1.6 What is the proposition and what makes Cheltenham distinct amongst its competitors?

Cheltenham is regarded by architectural historians as ‘the most complete Regency town in the UK’⁴. Aside from its architecture, it also has a stylish, contemporary edge created by the people who live here. Cheltenham is hard to beat for refined elegance and Regency terraces, annual festivals, internationally renowned educational establishments and a world famous racecourse. It is a hive of activity surrounded by glorious, quintessentially British, countryside.

⁴ Sir Roy Strong (former director of the V&A, author, art historian, garden historian,) who used the phrase, and he was quoted by John Julius Norwich (also historian, author, travel writer, TV personality).



Cheltenham as a town developed in its 18th and 19th century heyday as a pleasure health resort for wealthy visitors. The natural spring waters found here were said to provide health benefits and so many escaped the smog and disease of the cities to come to Cheltenham to 'take the water' or drink it – hence why it is often referred to as Cheltenham Spa. To describe Cheltenham as a spa town today would be somewhat misleading as the water can only be tasted at Pittville Pump room when it is open to the public, and there are a limited number of 'health spas' available. However, the legacy of this inland health resort is the most complete example of a Regency town in the UK as well as its attitude for enjoying the finer things in life – good food, entertainment, education and debate.

This context is used to best effect by Hotel du Vin, Cheltenham *'A hip 18th century hang-out thanks to George III, Cheltenham is still living up to its billing 200 years later...'*⁵

It was described in 2016 by the New York Times as 'a town enjoying a cultural renaissance' and by the Independent as a 'Design Destination' for its stylish places to eat, drink and stay.

Cheltenham has a population of just under 116,000 with just under half (47%) of its residents categorised as Wealthy Achievers (ACORN classification) against a national average of 23%. It supports approximately 72,000 jobs in a range of industries including defence, aerospace, electronics and tourism and generates between £2.4bn and £2.7bn in economic output. Of these around 3,000 jobs are within the tourism industry which accounts for 5% of all employment. Cheltenham is a diverse and welcoming town that has well established neighbourhood-based communities. It is also home to many high achieving schools, further education and higher education establishments celebrating excellent levels of educational attainment. In the past five years, it has also been described by a national media poll as one of the best places to bring up a family in the UK.

Cheltenham has an enviable shopping offer with several areas of independent boutiques, antique and lifestyle shops, alongside a central shopping area consisting of the famous Promenade and High Street. In 2018 John Lewis is set to open which will elevate its desirability as a shopping destination further.

⁵ Taken from <https://www.hotelduvin.com/locations/cheltenham/> May 2017

It also has a vibrant night-time economy, the largest such economy between Bristol and Birmingham, with an estimated 285 licensed premises in the town centre area out of 460 in the whole borough. The night time economy is bolstered by the presence of around 10,000 students at the University of Gloucestershire and from the many sporting events, particularly the Cheltenham Gold Cup Festival, the pinnacle of national hunt horse-racing with Gold Cup day itself attracting around 67,000 people alone. The cutting-edge jazz, classical and folk music, horseracing, family music and literature festivals attract people from across the globe. The four main cultural festivals – Literature, Jazz, Music and Science – see visitors of almost 225,000 people per annum, 34% of whom come from outside the county. The Racecourse sees over half a million visitors per year of which 69% are from outside a one hour drive time.

1.7 Visitor statistics and information⁶

The information below is what we know about Cheltenham's current visitors.

A visitor is someone who is making a visit to a main destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year for any main purpose (including) holidays, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes. This scope is much wider than the traditional perception of tourists, which included only those travelling for leisure⁷. We are defining our visitors as day visitors or tourists. Day visitors also includes residents.

Day visitors are made up of 'Same Day' visitors, also known as tourist day visitors spending at least 3 hours away from home, and 'Leisure Day' visitors spending less than 3 hours away from home but outside their usual environment for general leisure, recreational or social purposes. Those who spend less than 3 hours are not included in the annual volume and value survey; however within this strategy they are defined as residents who contribute directly to Cheltenham's local visitor economy.

⁶ The 'volume and value' statistics for Gloucestershire are taken from the most recent figures available by The South West Research Company in 2015. Historic figures are difficult to compare against as there have been gaps in the research conducted for Cheltenham, coupled with changes in how figures are constructed. With overseas statistics, the International Passenger Survey (IPS) survey needs to be treated with caution as the sample size is quite low. It does however give us some indicators.

⁷ <http://www.tourismsociety.org/page/88/tourism-definitions.htm>



The last group are tourists who are visitors staying away from home for one or more nights for any of the purposes noted above (domestic or from overseas).

1.7.1 Resident population (leisure day visitors)

There are just under 116,000 people who live in Cheltenham. According to research carried out during Autumn 2016⁸ some 47% of the local population are categorised as in the wealthiest ACORN group 'Affluent Achievers', but just 33% of them come into the town centre. Whilst there were a high number of those aged 34 and below coming into the centre of town family groups were particularly low.

The CARD research told us that 82% of visitors to the town centre were from the local area. Most from outside Cheltenham were from Gloucester, Stroud and Cirencester. Many who come to the town centre are not going into areas such as Montpellier and the Suffolks.

1.7.2 Day visitors (more than three hours)

According to the volume and value research of 2015 there were over 1.82 million day visits to Cheltenham, this is a drop of 2% since 2014. However, since 2008, day visitors have grown from 1.5 million to 1.8 million. Neighbouring Gloucester apparently saw significant growth reaching 3.1 million day visits in 2015, which is a result of an increased events and marketing programme. Previous results for Gloucester are unknown.

1.7.3 Tourists – domestic visitors

According to the volume and value research of 2015 UK staying visitors were worth £51m to Cheltenham's economy. This equates to 311k overnight trips with 688k nights (average 2.21 nights per visit). The number of trips is up 5% on 2014.

69% of visitors were on a leisure trip whilst 10% were on business.

The Cotswold District had 1.3m trips with an income of £97m, whilst Gloucester saw 292k trips with a value of £44m.

Cheltenham's position in relation to the Cotswolds both in geographical terms and in the eyes of the media provides a huge opportunity to increase market share within this area. Since 2015, VisitEngland has been tracking visitor perceptions of holiday destinations across Great

⁸ CARD group research conducted on street and online September – November 2016, on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham BID

Britain. This study explores behavioural and experience measures such as visitation, spend, stay length, satisfaction and advocacy within individual destinations. It also looked at imagery perceptions. Some of the findings are outlined below:

- Just over half of Great Britain's domestic visitors have visited the Cotswolds. Just over half of these visited more than a year ago.
- Visitors are most likely to come from Greater London (17%), the South East (17%) and West Midlands (12%).
- Visitors to the Cotswolds are more likely to stay in a hotel than they are in other countryside destinations.
- The average quality rating of the accommodation visitors have stayed in during their visit to the Cotswolds is 3.7 stars.
- The average number of visitors reporting stays in 4 or 5 star accommodation is above the countryside or GB average for those specific quality ratings.
- The Cotswolds has very low levels of rejection compared to other destinations across Great Britain. It has a higher number of considerers than the countryside or GB average.
- Visitors score the Cotswolds higher than other countryside destinations for the quality of the natural environment, quality of food and drink, its history and heritage, being welcoming, quality of accommodation and availability of independent shops.
- The Cotswolds is seen as a beautiful and relaxing destination for families and friends, with quality accommodation.
- It is seen as significantly more romantic, more upmarket and stylish than the rest of Great Britain.
- It is more associated with food and drink, nature, history and sports, rather than festivals, arts and shopping.
- The Cotswolds is seen as a traditional destination; more for the old, less for the young. It is not seen as exciting, out of the ordinary or fun.

Cheltenham must use its position next to the Cotswolds to maximise the opportunities. It also needs to develop its own identity that complements the offer. The number of accommodation options that Cheltenham has is a key selling point. Cheltenham needs to be aware of the perception of the the area as a place only for older people. This is not the image that Cheltenham wishes to portray of itself.

1.7.4 Tourists – overseas visitors

According to the volume and value research of 2015, overseas visitors generated just under £20m for Cheltenham's economy whereas the whole county generated £111m. Expenditure in Cheltenham is made up of 45k trips and 308k nights (average 6.8 nights). 18% were on a

leisure trip, 24% were on business and 50% were visiting friends and relatives. Anecdotal evidence suggests that over the past twenty years there were many more overseas visitors in Cheltenham, but with world events and an increasingly competitive market Cheltenham's market share has been declining. As overseas visitors are growing in the UK, this is a market that Cheltenham has an opportunity to grow.

The top five overseas visitors to Cheltenham, by nationality, according to the tourist information centre (TIC) (2014 last recorded stats) were (1) Japan (2) US (3) Australia (4) Spain (5) Italy. In comparison to key markets entering the UK, the top five in terms of volume are (1) France (2) US (3) Germany (4) Ireland (5) Spain. Cheltenham, like the Cotswolds, is not currently benefiting from the 'near' European markets as much as it could – France, Germany and the Netherlands in particular. According to VisitBritain, Germany and the Netherlands are keen fans of the UK and visit often several times per year taking in different parts of the country. They generally have a good understanding of the English language and are 'active' tourists with culture and wellbeing high on their agenda. They also visit year-round, booking through travel agents and independently.

VisitEngland has identified the Cotswolds as an 'Attract' brand which means it is one of the key hook destinations for encouraging interest in the UK. It is essential that Cheltenham maximises its associations with the Cotswolds and uses its location and accommodation stock to be part of this interest.

The following target markets and characteristics have been taken from the Cotswolds Marketing Plan 2017:

Target Markets	Characteristics
Japan	Female 18-35 & 'dankai' (retired) Fully Independent Travellers (FIT)
US	East coast FIT
N. Europe	Touring and FIT
China	Microgroups
Australia	FIT, 50+
Other Markets	



1.7.5 Business tourism

There are a number of businesses which benefit from business tourism or MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events). The largest capacity is at the Racecourse which can accommodate up to 900 people. There are no accommodation venues large enough to cater for a staying conference so the town cannot support large conferences currently. The town's accommodation offer is made up of a high number of guest houses, B&B's and mid-sized hotels with the largest hotel having 148 rooms (DoubleTree hotel formerly The Park). There is currently no conference service for central enquiries or facility to manage multiple hotel bookings for such a conference.

1.7.6 Festival visitors

63% of people attending the Festivals (Literature, Jazz, Science and Music) come from within Gloucestershire with the Jazz Festival attracting the highest proportion from outside at 38% and the Literature Festival at 34%. Cheltenham Racecourse attracts a significant number from outside the county; however, the New Year's Day race is attended mainly by those from within.

1.7.7 National trends

According to VisitEngland the staycation is continuing to grow and short breaks within the UK are seen as attractive. The weaker pound since the Brexit announcement in June 2016 has made the UK an even more appealing destination for overseas visitors. Businesses within the Cotswolds have seen a dramatic rise in overseas business. VisitEngland report that for first quarter of 2017 overseas visitors were up 13% against 2016. The future impact of Brexit is unknown for incoming visitors. A potentially harmful effect of Brexit is the high reliance of the tourism industry on overseas staff.

Some general tourism trends:

- Those with limited time and resources will seek to maximise their leisure spend – increasing short breaks (at the expense of longer ones) and turning Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) trips into leisure ones. Cheltenham sees a high number of VFR visitors, particularly those from overseas.
- Active tourism is growing as a reaction to more sedentary lifestyles – people also “de-stress” through adventure experiences. Cheltenham has access to walking and cycling routes through the surrounding countryside. The Forest of Dean with its increasingly active outdoor offer is also forty-five minutes' drive away.



- There is an international trend to 'do' things rather than 'see' things – people, in particular Millennials, want to become more immersed. We need to identify the experiences that exist in Cheltenham and bring them to the surface to create easy to access bookable product that is useful for the Travel Trade. Food and drink are key to this, as are unique experiences where visitors get to meet key people who can bring Cheltenham to life.

1.8 What do visitors think of Cheltenham?

Cheltenham has an international profile in the visitor economy due to the racecourse, in particular the 'Cheltenham Festival' which takes place over a week in March. Its profile as the location of GCHQ is internationally known; however, due to the secret nature of the work carried out there, it is difficult to use this as a direct attractor for the visitor economy. The key festivals are known in some niche markets including Literature and Jazz.

According to online research carried out by the CARD group in three UK destinations (Solihull, Bristol & Cardiff) in October 2016, people don't really know why they should visit Cheltenham for a leisure visit other than for the racing – and some are even turned off by this association.

The results showed that there is not a dislike for Cheltenham, more a lack of reason to visit when other destinations look more appealing.

Headlines from the online survey⁹ where respondents were asked what they think of Cheltenham and whether they visit or would consider visiting are:

- There is positivity towards the town; however 30-40% of people are at best 'ambivalent' – have mixed feelings, have no definitive reason for visiting
- 'Nice', 'good', 'lovely', 'pleasant' were all adjectives used which are pretty middle of the road and unconvincing
- Racecourse, spa, shopping, horse racing, shops, historic, Georgian – nouns used to describe the town's offer (unprompted – no mention of Festivals)
- Leisure, retail, Cotswolds, horse racing, family and friends – were reasons for visiting in past five years

⁹ These locations were chosen as the largest urban conurbations around a 60 – 90 minute drive time. These were expected to be the places from where we might get repeat day or overnight staying visitors.

- Whilst 40% were unlikely to stay over, 29% were likely and 31% unsure – a potential market opportunity if the offer is made more desirable
- Cost is the biggest factor in putting people off followed by more appeal elsewhere. The former could be due to ease of a day trip rather than cost of hotels
- What would encourage an overnight visit – 22% offers or deals, 17% events/attractions, 6% value hotels
- When prompted, the following were highlighted as attractive reasons to visit – quality hotels, Cotswolds, Festivals, Retail, horse racing, period features
- London, Devon, Cornwall, Lake District, Bath and Cotswolds all ranked higher in likely choice of overnight stay. Cheltenham came 73rd on the list.

1.9 Branding

1.9.1 The Cheltenham brand

In December 2016, a group of people from across Cheltenham were asked to participate in an exercise to crystalise Brand Cheltenham and understand it's Sense of Place. In this context, we refer to the brand as how visitors experience the inherent character and personality (brand essence) of Cheltenham.

Understanding Brand Cheltenham is critical as we represent the town to the world. Everything we do needs to be 'truthful' and 'authentic' to ensure that it has 'cut through' and lives up to the presented expectation.

We shall use the brand values and characteristics as a framework for assessing our marketing communications and the visitor product that we wish to present. With 'place' branding, there are some key differences from consumer and organisational brands to be aware of¹⁰:

- Consumer brands can often remain relatively abstract, their realities virtual and their brand promises untested. With place brands, sooner or later, audiences *always* experience the brand on-the-ground, in real life, in real time, and will weigh their expectations

¹⁰ Taken from The Way Design brand platform exercise who supported this work www.thewaydesign.co.uk

accordingly, and publicly. Witness *Trip Advisor*.

- To this end, for place brands to gain traction, they must make brand promises they can deliver on, and keep delivering on. Aspiration alone is not enough.
- Working on place brands requires pragmatism and attention to detail. As much, or more, work must be spent looking at visitor experience overall and brand touchpoints (working ‘bottom up’) as refining brand values with high-level stakeholders (working ‘top down’).
- Place brands are never ‘finished’. Whilst the *spirit of place* needs to feel as timeless and constant as possible the communication, evaluation and responsiveness of the brand needs to be particularly agile.
- Key audiences for brand comms and marketing are often particular businesses and visitor destination stakeholders within the area or region, more so than the end consumer. If we can ensure these have a clear sense of and support the overarching place brand, then these businesses can effectively do a lot of marketing and advocacy on the overall brand’s behalf – often more effectively than if done directly to consumer.

The *values* that underpin Cheltenham as part of the Place Strategy have been identified as:

<i>Creative</i>	<i>Pioneering</i>	<i>Nurturing</i>	<i>Connected – reconnected</i>
The <i>character, brand essence or spirit of the place</i> can be defined in the following additional characteristics:			
<i>Celebratory</i> – Encouraging, supporting, fostering, nurturing. Playful, but not childish.			
<i>Energising</i> – Surprising, inspiring, enthusing and nourishing. Restorative.			
<i>Charming</i> – Gracious, quintessentially English. Welcoming and friendly. Enchanting.			



1.9.2 The importance of the Cotswolds brand to Cheltenham

The Cotswolds is regarded as one of the top ten most desired destinations within the UK by overseas visitors. **Cheltenham is often considered part of the Cotswolds by media and prospective visitors.** As a result, many of Cheltenham's businesses benefit from the Cotswolds inbound visitors and media coverage of the internationally renowned 'Cotswolds' brand.

The main Destination Management Organisation (DMO) within the area is Cotswolds Tourism and so it is vital that we work with them in partnership for many reasons. Cotswolds Tourism does not operate under a management board. Whilst this was the desire in 2014, the planned model and funds were never achieved, so today it operates as a collaboration of tourism officers, each employed by the local districts of Tewkesbury, Stroud, Cotswold and West Oxfordshire and Cheltenham. Strategic decisions are made by this group with endorsement from an Advisory Board.

There is only one person employed directly from funds generated by Cotswolds Tourism membership and local authority contribution. The operational marketing service is run by an Executive Officer group made up of tourism officers from Tewkesbury, Stroud, Cotswold and West Oxfordshire and recently attended by Kelly Ballard representing a strategic position on behalf of Cheltenham.

The DMO does not currently receive funding from Gloucestershire County Council or the LEP, so if the aforementioned Local Authorities and the private sector do not contribute both cash and staff resource, then little or no marketing takes place.

The Cotswolds brand has an established international reputation and the visitor economy could be so much more buoyant. However, current resources restrict its ability to have a significant presence in VisitBritain and other collaborative marketing activities.

The **value of tourism to Gloucestershire as a whole is just over £1billion¹¹** with the Cotswold District Council area benefitting from the largest share at £328 million. There are over two million tourism related trips to Gloucestershire each year and Cheltenham sees 356,000 of these. The Cotswold District sees 545,000. The website operated by Cotswolds Tourism www.Cotswolds.com sees on average one million visitors per year (VisitCheltenham.com currently receives 250,000).

¹¹ Volume and Value Survey 2015 conducted by South West Research.



Despite the lack of funding for Cotswolds Tourism, there is still a significant market that Cheltenham could benefit from. The Cotswolds is regarded as a holiday destination, with people staying longer than the average two nights. This brings significant opportunities for Cheltenham as a base, or at least part of a base, for the holiday. Cheltenham is also perfectly placed as a base for visiting not only the Cotswolds, but Shakespeare's County (Warwickshire), the Malverns and Birmingham, often regarded as England's second city.

Accessing the services of VisitBritain (VB) and VisitEngland (VE) through Cotswolds Tourism VB/VE work across the country but only with DMO's. In Cheltenham's case, they see Cotswolds Tourism as the gateway to the area.

All opportunities and referrals go through Cotswolds Tourism and their various channels. If Cheltenham businesses are not members of Cotswolds Tourism then they miss out on the many opportunities this channel brings.

VB/VE are important advocates for destinations across the UK. They bring a variety of opportunities from international media and travel trade referrals to event attendance. Destination Bristol along with many other English DMO's benefit significantly from VB & VE. Media and travel trade referrals have previously been so frequent that it can be a full-time job just managing these. The results of these opportunities are seen in a number of ways but they are essential in growing national and international audiences, particularly for destinations with limited budgets.

Key opportunities have been identified for working with the Cotswolds brand and Cotswolds Tourism services (see Appendix 1 for rationale):

1. A www.visitcheltenham.com **website** that is linked to www.Cotswolds.com through a database and editorial platform
2. A new combined **membership** that links the proposed Cheltenham and existing Cotswolds Tourism marketing and business support services

This approach is not intended to diminish Cheltenham's own outstanding offer or its identity as a destination, but will enable best use to be made of the well-known Cotswolds brand and will bring mutual benefits.



1.10 Where are the product issues/gaps and opportunities?

There are some key challenges with the tourism 'product' and visitor experience within Cheltenham. Below are some of the key challenges that we need to understand and overcome.

1.10.1 The visitor peaks and troughs of the year

There is no doubt that the horse racing calendar in Cheltenham boosts the economy. However retail suffers during major race meetings whilst the hospitality businesses thrive.

Retail, accommodation and attractions suffer like other towns during January and February; however, many accommodation businesses benefit from walkers and those enjoying the Cotswolds. Each business, dependent upon its size, location and offer has its own story; however, all of this is anecdotal without a robust monitoring system in place. There is an opportunity to work with a system called Tstats already in place with Cotswold Tourism, although this is dependent on a business being a member. Destination Bristol has a system of monitoring occupancy for different sized accommodation businesses, attractions (rural and urban) and car parks which is a great indicator of monthly trends and can help businesses assess market share.

It is generally felt that outside of key 'race' meetings in March and November the town has the opportunity and capacity to increase the numbers of people visiting. There is also capacity during the other cultural events including the Literature and Jazz festivals. That said, an understanding of occupancy rates and availability is required.

There is quite a diverse array of events taking place throughout the year that appeal to niche audiences from around the UK. We need to understand these, support them and bring them together to work in partnership to cross market the town.

1.10.2 Visitors making the most of Cheltenham

Cheltenham is a beautiful town to visit if you know your way around; however, for visitors, it is quite a challenge to navigate both on foot or driving. The train station is at least a 15 minute walk from the centre; however, the bus station is in the heart of the town.

The Suffolks and Bath Road, along with Montpellier, which all have a distinctive, independent and unique offer, are easy to miss. There is work to do to help orientate people around the town through a combination of in-person, printed and digital information along with signage and



way finding. This includes reviewing the current role and format of the Tourist Information Centre situated within The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum foyer to consider how to best meet the needs of the visitor physically, digitally and virtually.

1.10.3 Appealing to young people

Research from the University of Gloucestershire, along with information taken from working with young people in the town, has identified both a perception and a potential reality that there is 'not enough' for young people.

Students are a huge boost to a local economy. Loans are there to be spent and millions of pounds are poured into cafes, restaurants, bars, pubs, clubs and shops in university destinations every year. Many of these businesses are also staffed by students. Students are often high users of public transport. Small independent stores also profit from this market as they are more accessible to those on foot than the big supermarkets.

Cheltenham needs to develop a more positive image for attracting and keeping young people aged 18 – 25. In collaboration with the University of Gloucestershire we need to highlight and present a younger image of what is in the town already, additionally we need to work with cultural providers to develop the offer for this age group further.

1.10.4 Understanding the business tourism/MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events) product and market

Several years ago a conference desk and marketing strategy for this market was managed by Cheltenham Borough Council. As austerity measures took place this service was cut drastically. Due to hotel and venue changes and developments, we no longer have an understanding of what 'product' exists within Cheltenham. We understand that the Racecourse can support a function of up to 900 people and that our largest hotel (DoubleTree by Hilton) has 148 rooms; however, all that is inbetween is unknown. We need to re-establish an understanding of the product and market opportunity that this presents.

5. How are we going to achieve our goals?

1.11 The action plan

1.11.1 Working environment

Primary outcomes	Secondary outcomes	Measure of success
Working environment		
Cheltenham's visitor economy is strategically developed and supported	There is a leadership and management model in place for Cheltenham tourism/visitor economy development and delivery.	Implement visitor economy strategy; businesses identify a clear lead organisation for supporting their needs.
	A business model is developed that supports a central marketing and visitor economy support service to sustain the future of visitor economy growth for Cheltenham.	Both public and private organisations are contributing time and finance. A membership model is developed with businesses from across Cheltenham signing up to be part of it. Business are attending networking events and benefiting from the service.

1.11.2 Working partnerships

Primary outcomes	Secondary outcomes	Measure of success
Working partnerships		
Partnerships are active and dynamic in driving the vision and delivery of tourism in Cheltenham	A firm relationship has been established with Cotswolds Tourism both strategically and in delivery.	<p>A service level agreement has been signed and Cheltenham is benefiting from closer links with Cotswolds Tourism.</p> <p>Joint membership scheme is developed.</p> <p>Linked digital presence is active which is providing Cheltenham businesses with a positive return on their investment and strengthening the reasons to visit the region.</p>
	Relationships with Marketing Gloucester, Shakespeare's England and Marketing Birmingham are building.	Shared learning and marketing referrals are taking place.
	The role, responsibilities and authority of the Tourism Partnership Group in the context of strategy and delivery is redefined with the new Business Model.	A Memorandum of Understanding is created to identify roles and responsibilities. More regular meetings and sub-group activity with regular two-way reporting.
	The businesses involved in the visitor economy are actively engaged in working with the central service. They are providing a	At least 100 members have joined the membership scheme by June 2018. This should

	<p>quality service, product and content that reflects the Cheltenham brand. They are actively engaged in initiatives to bring increased positive attention to Cheltenham.</p>	<p>be 180 by June 2019.</p> <p>Tourism businesses have reached a quality standard – nationally or regionally agreed standard.</p> <p>Businesses are actively sharing things to do and updating content to encourage reasons to visit.</p> <p>Businesses are supporting the central service to accommodate visiting media and contribute to marketing campaigns.</p>
--	---	---

1.11.3Product development

Primary outcomes	Secondary outcomes	Measure of success
Product development		
Cheltenham's product offer is refined and enhanced for visitor requirements of today	We will identify authentic, immersive experiences and stories that engage people with the 'real' Cheltenham. We shall pull out ways that visitors can 'experience' Cheltenham, not just see it.	Development of content that is used to promote the visitor offer is contained on VisitCheltenham and shared with other media.
	We will present a vibrant, eclectic and easy to access shopping and visitor offer to drive footfall to the town centre ensuring dispersement around areas including Montpellier, The Suffolks	We will create digital and printed collateral that not only promotes the area but helps with better navigation.

	and Bath Road.	<p>We will work with partners within the town to develop better way finding and accessibility.</p> <p>We will work with those involved in the Cultural Strategy to encourage vibrant, animated spaces.</p>
	We will work with businesses to ensure product is bookable to encourage overseas and travel trade opportunities.	Increase pre-booking and engagement with Travel Trade.
	We will examine options around the tourist information centre and visitor welcome to make it more accessible.	A visitor information and welcome service will exist that supports the needs of the visitor and the businesses within the town.
	We will work with Gloucestershire Airport to establish its presence as a boutique airport to encourage affluent travellers to visit and to live and work locally.	Clear services and marketing information will be available for use on appropriate marketing channels.
	We will ensure Cheltenham is accessible for all abilities.	We will work with DisabledGo to ensure we meet standards and support visitors who have different needs.
	We will make Cheltenham a coach friendly destination.	We will gain official Coach Friendly status.
	<p>The organisation developed as part of this strategy will act as a champion and first port of call for the needs of tourism and related businesses on such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural development including, for example, annual 	Members will be satisfied that they are being supported in their needs and enquiries.

	<p>events programme, anti-clash diary and booking systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reshaping the town centre and outer lying key retail and leisure areas, including the public realm, creating a connected sense of place • Car parking and public transport • Accessibility and routes/pathways into town centre – including brown signs 	
--	---	--

1.11.4 Market development

Primary outcomes	Secondary outcomes	Measure of success
Market development		
Growth of the visitor economy through marketing communications programmes and systems	<p>Target markets: We will satisfy a wide range of visitor needs; however we will actively target the following markets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents – families and the Affluent Achievers to visit more regularly • Day visitors – active cultural, foodies and female shoppers within a 45 minute drive time • Tourists – domestic: cosmopolitan pre-and post-family audiences in the South East, London and West Midlands. Holiday makers and coach travellers coming from the 	<p>Detailed marketing plans will be put in place to target each market in collaboration with relevant partners and members.</p> <p>Increased footfall and overnight stays monitored through a variety of sources.</p>

	<p>North to the South West coast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourists – overseas: cosmopolitan active culture seekers in line with the Cotswolds: Japanese, US, Northern European, Chinese, Australian. Travel trade and independent travellers • Additional audiences: supporting the University in key geographical areas, both domestically and overseas, to encourage young people to come and study in Cheltenham • We will encourage current visitors to stay longer and revisit more frequently <p>Business Tourism: We will identify product need and focus on relevant target markets as agreed with industry.</p>	
	<p>Positioning: We will put a spotlight on authentic Cheltenham and the key 'proposition', developing marketing plans that differentiate Cheltenham from other destinations. We will harness the heritage whilst presenting a young and vibrant destination that encourages younger people to visit, study and live in Cheltenham.</p> <p>We shall use Cheltenham's brand values and characteristics as a framework for all that we do, encouraging businesses in the visitor economy to do the same.</p> <p>We will leverage Cheltenham's location as a great place to stay to</p>	<p>Cheltenham content and marketing collateral will be easy to identify amongst other destinations.</p> <p>Wider number of reasons to visit will be identified by potential visitors.</p> <p>Cheltenham will have increased presence on the Cotswolds marketing channels and collateral.</p>

	<p>enjoy the Cotswolds, Stratford-upon-Avon and other key desirable tourist attractions along the M5/M4 corridor.</p>	
	<p>Digital Marketing: We shall redevelop visitcheltenham.com and create a content plan for the various ‘owned’ channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as a minimum.</p> <p>We will create our own content including video, photography and narrative for use on our owned and earned channels¹². We will develop ways to work with the local community (including bloggers) to generate authentic content around Cheltenham.</p>	<p>We will have a digital platform that reflects Cheltenham’s brand and authentic experiences.</p> <p>Visitor numbers and engagement levels grow significantly from the present day 250,000 visitors on visitcheltenham.com.</p> <p>We hold a bank of content including imagery that is reflective of Cheltenham to be used for owned and earned channels. It should also be available for use by members.</p>
	<p>We shall create effective marketing plans that reach our target markets, encouraging reasons to visit throughout the year using the wider Cheltenham event calendar, annual national dates and holiday periods.</p>	<p>Increased visits to all owned VisitCheltenham digital channels.</p> <p>Shareable advance marketing plans and opportunities that members can engage with.</p>
	<p>We will actively encourage travel and lifestyle media and influencers to visit and experience the authentic Cheltenham of today – the independent, the quirky and all aspects outlined in the brand platform. As part of this we will ensure that national</p>	<p>Increased media coverage.</p> <p>Increased coverage and inclusion in larger campaigns from national partners.</p>

¹² Owned channels are those marketing channels that we can actively change, such as VisitCheltenham.com or Facebook.com/Cheltenham. Earned channels are those where we need to influence others to talk about Cheltenham positively.

	partners understand what Cheltenham has to offer outside the racing calendar. These partners include VisitEngland, VisitBritain, Cotswolds Tourism and transport providers including, but not limited to, GWR, National Express, Stagecoach and the regional airports.	
	We will develop Cheltenham as a film location and actively seek filming opportunities, working with Creative England and others to provide a catalogue of locations within Cheltenham.	We are increasing income from film and TV. Visitors are coming to Cheltenham to spot film locations.

1.12 Annual plans

An annual tourism and marketing plan (working document) will be developed for each of the five years.

The anticipated key work areas are below for years 1 and 2, NB this is not exhaustive.

Year 1 July 2017 – March 2018	Year 2 April 2018 – March 2019
Invest in a resourced service that brings businesses together, acts as a Cheltenham visitor economy champion and marketing service. Create networking opportunities to inspire the visitor economy businesses of Cheltenham to work together. Begin supporting their needs and helping develop the product.	Membership/partnership scheme development: Roll-out of a membership scheme that encourages financial contribution to the service in return for clear member benefits. This model is to be a combined Cheltenham/Cotswolds model.
Brand proposition: Crystalise Brand Cheltenham and incorporate the values into everything we do.	Brand Rollout: Ensure all touch points are in line with the brand. Encourage partners to use the new brand approach.



Year 1 July 2017 – March 2018	Year 2 April 2018 – March 2019
<p>Digital redesign: Redevelop VisitCheltenham.com. Develop and grow Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest channels.</p>	<p>Expand target markets: Develop plans alongside the University and Cotswolds Tourism to reach international markets – including The Great West Way (encouraging London based tourists to come west).</p>
<p>Utilise partnerships to reach wider cost effective marketing channels: Establish more effective, working relationships with key external partners including Cotswolds Tourism, VisitEngland and the various transport providers including, but not limited to, GWR, National Express, Stagecoach, Cross Country Trains, Birmingham and Bristol Airports.</p> <p>We shall work closely with the management team at Cotswolds Tourism to develop Cotswolds.com into a platform that champions Cheltenham more obviously and presents a wider Cotswolds experience.</p> <p>Get involved in the Great West Way initiative, which encourages London based tourists to come west.</p>	<p>Digital growth: Increase ‘new’ content on partner channels both within Cheltenham and externally. Grow social media following and email databases.</p>
<p>Content creation: Creation and delivery of an annual plan for delivering new, authentic, shareable content around events, lifestyle and other reasons to visit. This will involve working with local attractors to focus on ‘experiences’, local people to highlight authentic stories, and local lifestyle and travel bloggers who can write about Cheltenham independently.</p>	<p>Work closely with Cotswolds Tourism to increase national and international visitors: Work in collaboration on their marketing strategy ideally representing Cotswolds.com as a ‘touring’ destination for pre-and post-family target markets, groups and other niche markets such as walking and cycling.</p> <p>Take advantage of collaborative opportunities with other external</p>

Year 1 July 2017 – March 2018	Year 2 April 2018 – March 2019
Commissioning of new photography and filming of the authentic Cheltenham brand proposition and key aims.	partners.
Reaching target markets: Focus on residents, day visitors and domestic tourists.	Creation of image bank
PR, content and influencer reach: The new content and news will be pushed through a variety of networks internationally, including increased media familiarisation visits, to begin writing about authentic Cheltenham. We will host regular blogger meetups around agreed themes.	PR, content and influencer reach: Develop interest around current niche markets – stay longer.
Review current literature and wayfinding: To establish a plan of action to enable better visitor orientation beginning with a new map based solution.	Implement plan for wayfinding to enable better visitor orientation.
Cotswolds Tourism partnership: Establish agreement and plans for collaborative working in the form of joint membership and combined digital opportunities.	Implement plan to attract the MICE market working with hospitality and other key partners/members.
MICE market product and marketing review: We will establish a working group of businesses who are keen to attract this market and create a separate marketing plan.	
Upgrade the Tourist Information Centre to support visitor needs: We will review options and develop a sustainable business model to	



Year 1 July 2017 – March 2018	Year 2 April 2018 – March 2019
support the future plans. Included in this will be a review of handling visitor enquiries both from visitors, trade and the media along with literature and digital platforms including maps, apps and printed guides. We will look to make efficiencies where possible working with others both in Cheltenham and within the wider region	



1.13 Budget and resource

The below table outlines the estimated resources, cost and income of a Transitional Marketing Service moving towards a fully functional operation. Step 1 is expected to run for nine months (August 2017 – April 2018) to trial the needs and business model for a long-term solution which includes the Tourist Information Centre.

The Transitional Marketing Service is a collaborative marketing service funded by both public and private organisations in order to create a step change.

Staff resources for the service operate on a self-employed/freelance basis in order to keep accommodation overheads low and enable the activity to develop quickly. These personnel will be experienced in the visitor/tourism economy. This model also allows us to assess the permanent resources necessary in future. There will be a small charge to support admin costs for example invoicing of advertising or membership.

Those funding partners for the Transitional Service include Cheltenham Borough Council, the Cheltenham BID, the Racecourse (The Jockey Club) and a small number of key contributors. This will establish a point of contact and coordinator of industry engagement. It will introduce a proactive marketing plan including redesign of VisitCheltenham, development of social media engagement, printed collateral including map, and development of marketing content to elevate Cheltenham to take advantage of partnership opportunities.

Step 1 will also include a detailed assessment and development of a membership model.

The TIC solution will be confirmed within Step 1 and a strategy to take it forward will be put in place, working with The Cheltenham Trust.

Estimated Transitional Marketing Service			
Expenditure		Income	
Marketing and Support Staff – self-employed/agency			
Destination Manager	35,000	Membership Sales*	25,000
Retained Marketing Agency	20,000	Cheltenham Borough Council	60,000
Digital Content Editor	17,000	Advertising Sales	15,000
Membership Executive	17,000	Key Partner contribution	55,000
		Other	11,000
Total	£89,000	Total	£166,000
Marketing budget		*If we achieve membership sales of predicted £68,000 in future years, we would increase our contribution to Cotswolds Tourism to £20,400 and provide the service with a surplus of £36,600	
Marketing support including website development and campaigns	52,000		
Contribution to Cotswolds DMO estimated**	7,500	**If a combined membership is agreed	
Total	£59,500		
Additional costs			
Admin	6,000		
Expenses	5,000		
Total	£11,000		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£159,500		
		Total surplus	£6,500



1.14 Monitoring and reporting – regular monitoring and annual reporting

Monitoring would be carried out in the following ways:

1. Monthly analysis of occupancy rates and visitor footfall (possibly through T-Stats – run by Cotswolds Tourism)
2. Conduct annual Volume and Value Survey with Cotswolds Tourism
3. Review all stats annually in line with other regional destinations and VisitEngland national trends
4. Digital analysis: Monthly analysis of visitors to VisitCheltenham.com, followers and likes on social media along with engagement rates, numbers of email newsletter sign ups
5. PR – annual number of press and blogger visits and coverage gained in key target audience media
6. Number of new members/partners signed up to future funding
7. Number of networking events held
8. Collaborative working examples aided within Cheltenham
9. Examples of influence on external partner collaboration and tourism strategy
10. Examples of influence on collaborative working, championing the visitor economy

Reporting

1. Monthly reporting to the funding bodies
2. Bi-monthly email updates to members and associates
3. Quarterly reporting to partners and members. One-to-one meetings with key partners at times to be confirmed
4. Annual tourism and visitor forum for Cheltenham members and associates

Appendix 1: Key opportunities for working with the Cotswolds brand and Cotswolds Tourism

As part of the strategy to engage more businesses within the visitor economy there are two distinct propositions:

1. A visitcheltenham.com **website** that is linked to Cotswolds.com through a database and editorial platform
2. A new combined **membership** that links the proposed Cheltenham and existing Cotswolds Tourism marketing and business support services

1. Proposed website development and integration with Cotswolds.com

The current tourism website www.visitcheltenham.com is updated regularly; however, due to a lack of resources and 'members' or advertisers, its content is severely lacking.

Businesses within Cheltenham's visitor economy are currently able to advertise on visitcheltenham.com; however, the numbers that take up this opportunity are very low. Members or advertisers on visitcheltenham.com number around 20, which draws a minimal income as it relates to website listings only. In recent years, there has not been enough resource to develop this.

Both Cotswolds.com and visitcheltenham.com are run on New Mind platforms however they are not linked. New Mind¹³ are a Liverpool based tourism website developer who are leaders in their field across Europe. Many DMOs use this platform and benefit from their understanding and subsequent developments in destination marketing.

There have been several examples of destinations using a local provider in recent years, only to regret their decision and return to a New Mind solution, for example Marketing Manchester and Bournemouth.

Currently there are annual charges of around £11,000 for VisitCheltenham.com. This site is in need of an overhaul which is likely to cost around £15,000 to present a more contemporary design and functionality. A report outlining the website options will be produced.

¹³ <https://www.newmind.co.uk/>



It would operate as a form of microsite retaining its own identity for Cheltenham focused searches but with opportunities to link content directly into the main landing pages of Cotswolds.com.

Visitcheltenham.com receives around 250,000 visits to the website per year whilst Cotswolds.com receives around million visits per year. Cotswolds.com is also the site that is currently referred to by visitengland.co.uk for Cheltenham.

There are many benefits to an integrated online offer aside from the cost savings. They include:

- Content on visitcheltenham.com would be immediately visible on Cotswolds.com
- Increased content from a new marketing staff resource means increased presence of Cheltenham on this key channel
- Cheltenham businesses are likely to be more interested in this combined membership than having to join two
- Cheltenham content is more likely to be promoted on Cotswolds.com social media channels which have significant engagement rates

The downsides to an integrated website would be:

1. Is the future of Cotswolds Tourism secure and what would happen to the website if it should fold? We have assessed this risk as low to medium. The Cotswolds is a brand which has had many managed forms over the past ten years but it has always retained its core digital asset. As the site is owned by New Mind, if there were any issues then we could pull out of this partnership and the content could quickly and easily be ported over to an alternative solution.
2. The web address visitcheltenham.com once clicked upon would become www.Cotswolds.com/cheltenham.

2. A combined Cotswolds/Cheltenham membership model

There are around 200 businesses (not including retail) in Cheltenham, that we know of, who might engage proactively in the visitor economy and become members. Despite this there are only around 20 businesses engaged in either the Cheltenham or Cotswolds Tourism advertising or membership models.



With a proactive membership executive, a new marketing and business support service and a new linked website it is estimated that a membership could raise around £68,900, based around gold, silver and bronze levels dependent on benefits.

Whilst the details need to be ironed out, we are proposing that we give 30% of any membership funds raised directly to Cotswolds Tourism. This would amount to just over £20,000 based on the estimated £68,900.

Discussions still need to take place around any contribution by the BID and the BID members benefit of this service.

The benefits of this approach:

- There are currently too many organisations within the market competing for membership and income. Most provide a business support, networking and lobbying service; however, there is little proactive marketing opportunity. The dual membership would be more appealing than a single stand-alone membership.
- Whilst Cheltenham has its own offer that can stand alone, by far and away the largest annual footfall driver for leisure visitors from outside the area is the Cotswolds.
- If Cheltenham were to have its own membership model, any members would still need to become members of Cotswolds Tourism to benefit from its marketing channels and support services. This would be costlier to business.
- The Cotswolds is one of the most desired places to visit in the UK by overseas visitors; it is also highly desirable for national visitors. It is currently under-resourced and needs increased funding to support its work. If we can support the growth in visitors to the area then Cheltenham will benefit.
- Cotswolds Tourism already has lots of services set up that we could benefit from including links to VisitEngland and VisitBritain, training, business support and advice for accommodation businesses, monthly member news and TStats – the monthly visitor monitoring service. All of this could be incorporated into membership.
- Cotswolds.com has access to just under a million website visitors per year, it has a highly engaged social media following and 50k consumer email addresses all of which we would get greater access to if we were to partner with them.
- For members uploading content, they would only have to do it once which saves time. This also makes sure the content is not at risk of being duplicated and the website being penalised by SEO (search engine optimization).



In order for this to work effectively, a number of things would need to be agreed including:

- Cheltenham to have representation at the Executive Officer level to ensure strategic input into the direction and marketing of Cotswolds Tourism
- A Service Level Agreement or partnership agreement