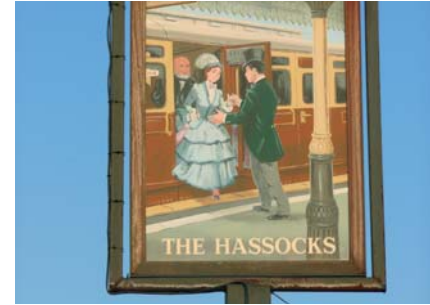




Hassocks

“
Hassocks is perfectly placed as the Gateway to the South Downs. Its train and road links to London and Brighton make it the perfect base for a visit to the new National Park.
 ”



Need for the Project

The project grew out of needs identified in the Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint Economic Action Plan (2005) and the Hassocks Village Action Plan (2003) to provide accessible, clear information for residents and visitors to access the outstanding local countryside without using their cars.

Consultation within the community produced recommendations including:

- the need for quality local businesses and services providing for most needs locally
- good quality local transport, including for pedestrians and cyclists
- quality leisure and sports activities for all age groups

Key Facts

County:	W.Sussex
District:	Mid Sussex
Population:	7000
Project Started:	2009



The Process

Hassocks Community Partnership and Action in Rural Sussex asked Tourism South East to facilitate a Tourism Development Workshop, which brought 33 of the area's key stakeholders together to identify what Hassocks has to offer and to develop a visitor strategy. As a result,

the Visitor Group was formed to develop a visitor programme, which has held a number of meetings and consultations with a wide range of community members to plan this project. Hidden Britain South East and Action in Rural Sussex have provided support with planning, alongside local volunteers and representatives of the county and district councils.

Volunteer time and expertise is crucial. The group includes a volunteer with a background in tourism marketing who is coordinating marketing, publicity and PR. Other volunteers have developed a PR action plan and taken responsibility for planning a launch event, with a fun family cycle challenge for up to 200 cyclists, a BBQ, some bike taster sessions and much more to get the project going with a bang and plenty of good publicity. Walking and cycling routes have been described by other knowledgeable local volunteers.

A further volunteer is coordinating the finance, administration and infrastructure side of the project as well as some of the funding proposals. She will now move into a formal part time paid role, including overseeing accounts, reporting to donors and liaising with the joint venture partner as well as completing the business plan with the assistance of a specialist from Action in Rural Sussex. The HCP Chair is overseeing the project and dealing with the complex issues of legal contracts between the various parties and partners involved.

What is Hidden Britain South East?

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

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

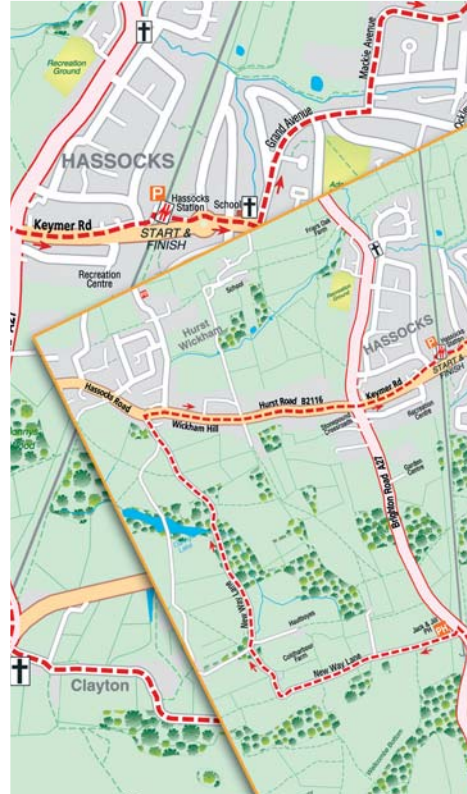


Hidden Britain

Progress to date

Who is Involved?

The Visitor Group consists of around 15 members drawn from local business, action groups and the community. Of these, around 6 are very actively involved in the planning and implementation of the programme, with others advising or contributing where their expertise is particularly useful. Budgens, for example, have made a £500 cash donation to the project and the Hassocks Hotel pub is providing the land for the cycle hire business building.



Project Outputs

- ▶ The project will create a new cycle hire facility, which will consist of a wooden building next to the Hassocks Hotel pub, which is in Hassocks railway station car park. The building will house at least 20 hire bikes, including bikes for children and will also offer repairs and maintenance for those with their own bike.
- ▶ 5 cycle routes and 5 walking routes distributed in leaflet format as well as online
- ▶ A new Visit Hassocks website.
- ▶ Cycle racks will be placed on the High Street
- ▶ 4 new map and information boards installed.



Status of Funding

A total of £73,151 has now been secured. The funding breaks down as follows:

- ▶ Awards For All £9,836
- ▶ Leader £10,000
- ▶ Collabor8 £5,000
- ▶ Budgens £500
- ▶ West Sussex County Council (in kind) £5,000
- ▶ Mid-Sussex District Council (in kind) £525
- ▶ SEEDA small rural towns fund £32,000
- ▶ County Local Committee Community Interest Fund £6,000
- ▶ West Sussex Social Enterprise Awards 1st Prize £5,000
- ▶ Mid-Sussex Healthy Living Fund £5290





Project Achievements

► Businesses engaged (17)

The project will run as a joint venture with an existing small business and 2 others are actively involved in supporting the project. Additionally, the local printer/publisher is providing assistance with publicity.

► no. of volunteers (25)

In addition to the core of 5 or 6 managing the project, many others are involved in developing, testing and photographing for the routes, developing the website, liaising with the train company and planning the launch event. New volunteers continue to be welcomed.

► Skills & training

Local people and businesses benefited from the destination marketing workshop, the coordinator is working on business planning on an ongoing basis with a business planning mentor and the new bike hire employee will receive NVQ level training in mechanics. The project will train at least 2 local people to be able to deliver safety training in schools and will deliver cycle safety training, basic bike maintenance and cycle fun days in local schools. A new special needs bike will be purchased to allow children who may find other bicycles difficult to use to take part.

► Marketing support

The skills that 3 volunteers with professional tourism marketing and PR experience, bring to the project are extremely valuable. In addition to the materials produced, their support, alongside input from Hidden Britain, has already produced local press coverage and it is anticipated that the launch event and other publicity will be key in making a success of the business.



Hidden Britain Input

Hidden Britain have provided input at all stages of the project planning, funding and now implementation.

We organised a destination marketing workshop for the village and others nearby, which brought people together to discuss how to promote Hassocks and focus on the major issues in planning the project.

Hidden Britain helped develop an action plan for the project and has been instrumental in identifying potential sources of funding and assisting the group to develop proposals to the relevant funders, which has resulted in successful fundraising of over £70,000.

Hidden Britain is now providing assistance with project implementation by helping to find and procure services for the publicity materials and cycle and walks guides as well as assisting with ongoing action and business planning.



Hidden Britain SE Case Study

Hassocks

Going Forward

▶ The group is now finalising the contracts for the land lease, with their business partner and coordinator. The business plan, including cashflow and detailed action plan is also being finalised. During May and June 2010 the building work will be completed and the business is expected to be open by the beginning of June.

▶ The launch event will be held on June 26th, by which time the business will be up and running and all publicity materials printed, online and distributed. It will then be a case of ensuring the business continues to be well-publicised and monitoring its progress and the benefits for Hassocks.

▶ It is hoped that increased cycling locally will result in growing support for future projects such as an off road route to the Downs and a new footpath, which have been identified as part of the community plan but were beyond the scope of this project.



Lessons Learned

▶ Joint ventures between communities and business represent an innovative and practical way of benefiting the community and ensuring business principles are applied, but the process of coming to a working agreement and agreeing a legal contract of the partnership should not be underestimated. This requires detailed thinking, careful and sensitive negotiation and significant input from a lawyer, which must be budgeted for.

▶ Funding from so many different funders requires a great deal of time and effort to secure and manage. This project has budgeted to pay a part-time coordinator to manage the necessary record keeping and reporting to funders, which is necessary at this scale.

▶ Volunteers need to have defined roles, clear targets and devote regular time to their tasks.

▶ Keeping the local press and newsletters informed is a good way to gather local support and additional volunteers.



The contribution of Hidden Britain to our project has been outstanding. Claudia Townsend of Hidden Britain has provided professional input that has enabled us to make progress that we would not have been able to achieve on our own.

CLlr Colin Wilsdon

Chair of Hassocks Community Partnership



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

Further Information

- www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk
- www.sercc.org.uk
- www.tourismse.com
- www.seeda.co.uk/rdpe

