



Wootton Bridge 

Project Case Studies



Supported By



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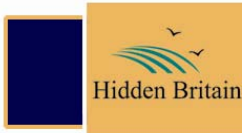
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| About this report | 3 | About this report |
| Project Report | 4 | This report is intended to describe the process used and results delivered by an individual Hidden Britain project. It covers all the major elements of the project so it can be used as a case-study for other communities. In order to make this as useful as possible it is presented in an objective light with attention paid to the failings as well as the successes. |
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Overview of project

The Wootton Bridge project aimed to promote the enjoyment of Wootton's varied heritage assets to both residents and visitors. It provided key interpretation to extend visitor stays in the village thereby helping to build the village into a prosperous community. The project also aimed to raise awareness locally of what is on the doorstep, building community pride and interest in future community projects.



Need for the project

Wootton Bridge is situated on the north coast of the Isle of Wight, midway between Ryde and Newport. It is about 3 1/2 miles from each and within a short distance from the main ferry terminals of Fishbourne [Wightlink] and East Cowes [Red Funnel]. The village is located amidst beautiful countryside, some of which bears Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Site of Special Scien-

tific Interest designations.

However Wootton Bridge suffers from its close proximity to the main ferry ports. Being along one of the busiest roads on the Island, it is not a natural destination for visitors. Very few visitors or locals are aware of the depth and variety of heritage the village has to offer. Ironically, being a gateway to the Island has meant Wootton Bridge has become just that, in as much as few bother to stop and explore.

Planning of the project

Recognising this issue the Wootton Bridge Regeneration Plan (an action plan in response to the Healthcheck consultation) has been set in motion. This is a joint Parish Council/Village Partnership initiative which involves close contact and consultation with the community.

Shortly after its founding in 1999, the Wootton Bridge Village Partnership produced a Heritage Trail leaflet, enabling visitors to explore the area.





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It proved to be very popular but it was realised that a revision was required so much more could be done to enhance the visitor experience.

In the autumn of 2005, Hidden Britain started work to assist the Village Partnership in achieving its objective of revealing more of what Wootton and its surroundings had to offer thereby attracting visitors and increasing revenue into the village.



This project has grown from the aspirations of the Regeneration Plan through the opportunity offered by Hidden Britain to allow the community themselves to research and showcase the truly distinctive heritage, history, landscape and culture of the village.

The aim and objectives of the Project are:

- ◆ To raise the awareness of local people of the heritage in Wootton.
- ◆ To raise the awareness of visitors of the heritage in Wootton.
- ◆ To attract more visitors to Woot-

ton.

- ◆ To provide a fun, healthy and interpretative method of encouraging interest in the village heritage.
- ◆ To build local confidence and pride.
- ◆ To provide experience and skills to local people involved.
- ◆ To actively involve the younger generation in a community project.
- ◆ To encourage the community to take on the decision-making process.
- ◆ To encourage participation and unity between residents.

Who was involved?

A small working group was established and comprised members with a wide variety of skills and knowledge.

- ◆ Roger Macdonald - project leader for the former heritage trail leaflet and Chairman of the partnership's task group for the village environment.





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- ◆ Doreen Gazey – Parish Archivist and photographer
- ◆ Brian Reeves – Parish Councillor and with a keen interest in social history through music and song.
- ◆ Keith Varcoe – Parish Councilor and former businessman
- ◆ Alfred Dewing – local resident with a wealth of knowledge on local history
- ◆ Lynda Smith - Parish Clerk and administrator.

The group worked with James Turner of Hidden Britain to prepare a funding bid to the Local Heritage Initiative for funds to allow the project to be implemented.

Status of funding bid

£8,700 grant obtained from LHI in January 2006

What was included?

A series of 5 walks leaflets in and around

Wootton Bridge that explore the varied heritage of the town and surrounding area.

The walks will be published as double sided A4 folded to DL leaflets, and cover the following areas:

- ◆ Circular walk to Woodside, which will concentrate on the natural heritage of the area around Woodside beach and Wootton creek that is partly AONB.
- ◆ Historical walk around the village – which will concentrate on the built features and cultural heritage of the village.
- ◆ Woodhouse and Littleton – which will concentrate on the industrial heritage of the railway, but also on the built and cultural heritage south of the village.
- ◆ Countryside and landscape – which will concentrate on the natural heritage of the surrounding countryside.



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- ◆ Wootton Musical Heritage – including the phenomenon that surrounded the 1969 Wootton pop festival.

5,000 copies of each leaflet will be produced. They will be free of charge.

An event was also planned to launch the series of leaflets to the general public. There was planned accompanying publicity to promote the leaflets to both local residents and visitors.

Project implementation

In order to proceed a number of other local residents freely gave of their time to the project. They provided additional information, contributed illustrative material for the leaflets and actually tested the walks by going out and treading every inch of them.



A number of working group meetings were held at which the themes for the

walks, five in all, were agreed and draft texts were compiled. These were reviewed critically and each succeeding draft eventually culminated into what was considered to be an achievable walk which would not only inform but also reveal Wootton’s stunning surroundings – and provide healthy exercise.



The leaflets themselves were professionally designed by Simone Whitehurst of Coco Design Co. Printing was carried out locally on the Island by Crossprint Limited.

A formal launch of the walks leaflets was held at the village's annual Party in the Park on Saturday 15 July 2006. With a large number of people in attendance, it proved to be an ideal opportunity to bring the project to a much wider audience and copies of the leaflets were distributed.

On the following day, Sunday, there was folk music and other entertainment appropriate to the Musical Heritage leaflet and participants were encouraged to try



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out the walks for themselves.

Who benefits?

The project has provided benefits to the local heritage and environment by an increased awareness of their importance through an accessible medium that encourages people to get outside and find out more. Taking these steps may well encourage people to get more actively involved with local groups, which in turn can build cohesiveness and unity between groups in a community.

The project has also been integral in encouraging healthy activity and exercise amongst the resident population and other groups across the island (see attached email).

The project also aims to increase local pride and confidence to allow future projects of a similar ilk to be undertaken.



Finally the project aims to increase the economic benefit derived by local businesses from visitors to the village, by

signposting to businesses and services before/during and after a walk.



“The whole project brought together people from different backgrounds and with different skills and yet by working in partnership they produced the means for others to enjoy their own very special part of the Island.”

Hidden Britain input

The Hidden Britain Development Officer’s (James Turner (JT)) prime role in this project was in getting the ball rolling. The local group proved extremely capable and able to work without the need for constant supervision. Therefore JT worked with the partnership to develop the action plan and plan a delivery strategy for the project. He co-wrote the funding bid with Lynda Smith and the group. He provided ongoing advice and support to the group, and was on hand to help plan the launch event as well as publicity and distribution.



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Achievements

- ◆ The dedication and enthusiasm from the community.
- ◆ The ability of the group to function without hand holding.
- ◆ The interest at the launch event and the subsequent excellent take up of the leaflets.
- ◆ That the community has gone on to run several other large scale projects by themselves.
- ◆ The continued interest in and awareness of tourism.



Future Plans

An evaluation of the project is planned with a view to developing a 5 year tourism strategy. JT has been asked to help facilitate the development of this.



Lessons learnt

- ◆ Strong administrative support is needed at a local level to allow projects to flourish.
- ◆ Small, realistic projects work far better under the HB model than large complicated ones.
- ◆ The right mix of dedicated people is necessary for real success.