

Case Study

Visit Midhurst

Background

Visit Midhurst is the new brand name created by Midhurst Tourism Partnership; a group drawn from local business, local representatives and community bodies in and around Midhurst.

The Partnership's core objectives are;

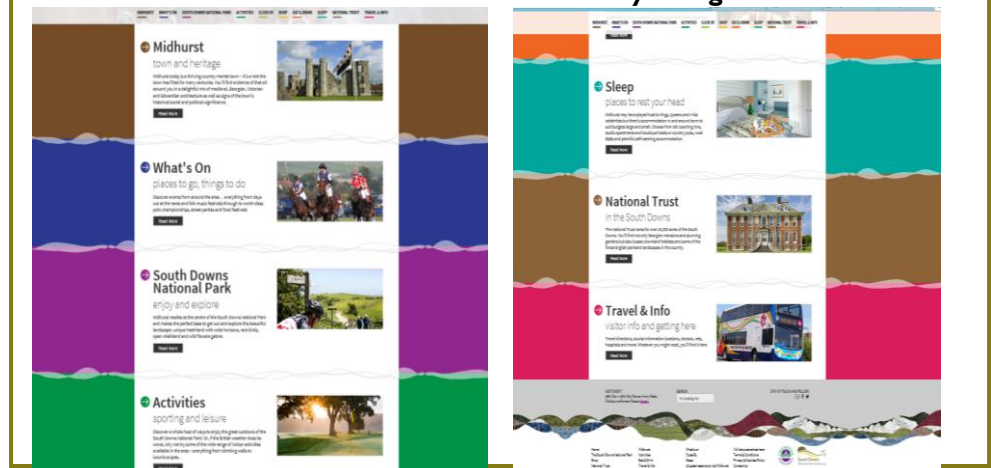
- the co-ordination and provision of tourism marketing
- to liaise with other groups representing the needs and aspirations of the community and local businesses.

The main tourism products of the Visit Midhurst brand are the production of a brochure and visitor information website.

The previous Visit Midhurst website needed updating to ensure it used the new Visit Midhurst brand which was developed for the redesigned visitor guide in 2014/15.

The new look website for Midhurst and the surrounding area aimed to promote things to do and places to stay in Midhurst, alongside promotion of key messages about the National Park.

New look Visit Midhurst incorporating the National Park Shared Identity Design



The project

In 2011 Midhurst Tourist Partnership (MTP) established a 'Visit Midhurst' website and an 'Enjoy Midhurst' brochure. However, without ongoing investment the website lacked content and regular updates and also did not have the format requirements to be compatible with hand held devices. The design of the website also began to date and the website increasingly fell short of its original remit as the primary source of online visitor information.

In 2014, the 'Enjoy Midhurst' brochure went through a redesign to be more substantive and provide visitors with a much enhanced and informative guide to all that Midhurst has to offer. The website clearly mismatched the quality of the brochure and thus MTP sought funding for the redesign of the website in late 2014.

SDNPA contributed £2,500 to the total £5,000 cost of the website redesign which was matched funded by Chichester District Council. Midhurst-based web design company Hooli was successful in securing the contract. They delivered value for money product incorporating the 'National Park Shared Identity' throughout and delivered solutions to keeping the site relevant and easily updated.

The core aim of the website is to encourage more visitors to come to the area and enhance their experience whilst visiting – e.g. with the gps facility they can look up the nearest shops and restaurants to where they are in town. The new website also links to social media providing a more efficient method of updates and events listings.

The project was framed to be one of the early exemplars in the use of the South Downs National Park shared identity being combined with local identity.

“This new website will encourage more visitors to come to the area and enhance the experience when they’re here enjoying Midhurst”

Phillipa McCullough, Midhurst Tourism Partnership

The outcome

The design of the website has been created to be mobile and tablet device friendly. The main characteristics of mobile friendly sites are demonstrated by the likes of Amazon, the BBC, and the new windows 10 menu page. The advantage is that they are instantly readable and easily navigable for all types of small screen. Through time, websites will become accessed much less by desktops and increasingly by hand held devices. The new Visit Midhurst website design has delivered this successfully.

The re-design of the website is a success by qualitative measures, visitors can easily find the information they need to plan a visit to Midhurst and the surrounding area. Whilst it is too early to provide any evidence of the financial impact, it is hoped that the new website will soon lead to an increase in visitor spend and that contributions from key businesses will help fund the website in the longer term. The website has already gained additional long term support from the Cowdray Estate in order to update business profile information and provide a telephone enquiry support service to furnish the website with local events and activities information.

Google Analytics shows that that there have been 14,499 page views over 5,461 sessions in the first quarter since launch on the 10 June 2015, this represents a healthy increase in traffic from the very best month of activity on the previous website. New visitor numbers per month have risen from 14% at a peak on the old website to 19.6% on the new website.

The future

The regular updating of Visit Midhurst to reflect changes in local information and to keep up with trends and shifts in technology will help it attract sufficient traffic and advertising revenue in the long term.

The website relaunched in June 2015 and continues to have links added monthly, new businesses are now being added and a viable income stream is being developed to ensure that the site is sustainable financially.

The long term management and financial sustainability of the new website has always been a key concern for MTP. The new site has generated some early success with the Cowdray Estate offering a technical IT support service.

The local website is increasingly the first ‘port of call’ for potential visitors and thus the quality and accuracy of online information provided is central to the aim of translating online visits to actual physical visits. It is also critical in giving that welcoming first impression before the visitor ever arrives.

<http://visitmidhurst.com/>

