

Case Study

Petworth Vision CIC: Petworth Heritage Virtual Experience

Background

In 2020, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) set up a Recovery Fund of £375,000 to help support partner organisations and local communities in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cultural heritage grants, totalling £81,272.59 were awarded to twelve organisations through an open application process.

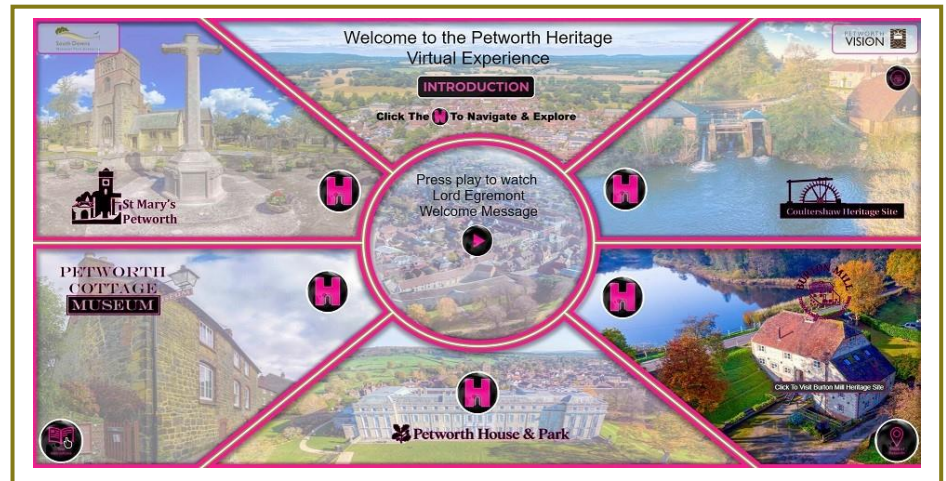
The annual Petworth Heritage Open Days weekend was cancelled in September 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, losing the opportunity to inform and engage locals and visitors with the town's rich heritage.

Petworth Vision CIC (Community Interest Company) was awarded funding for the production of a virtual tour experience.

The digital tour will offer additional promotional capacity for future Heritage Open Days, as well as allow more people to be able to access the rich and varied history of the area.

This project not only reflects the importance of these annual heritage events to Petworth, but the strong collaboration established between the Petworth Heritage Partnership, a network of local heritage organisations in the area.

<https://petworthcommunity.org/petworth-heritage/>



The project

The project developed and delivered a [360 virtual tour experience](#), bringing together a selection of heritage sites and historic buildings across Petworth, including Petworth House and Park (National Trust), Petworth Cottage Museum, Coultershaw Beam Pump and St. Mary's Church among others.

The tour features an opening welcome from Lord Egremont and enables users to visit selected interior and exterior spaces, zoom in and out, and access additional content. The website is simple to use, easy to navigate, and has the capacity to grow by including additional sites and enhanced content in the future.

The project has enabled smaller organisations to offer a digital user experience, helping them to reach a wider audience – particularly crucial during the pandemic - whilst epitomising Petworth Vision CIC's mission; to serve the community and respond to opportunities that help meet local needs.

The project was awarded £1,800 from the SDNPA Covid-19 Recovery Fund.

“A big thank-you to SDNPA for the funding and James (from ‘360 Dragonfly’) for the production of this great virtual experience. I have received only positive comments about this very engaging way of presenting the Mill and its heritage. An extraordinary amount of work must have gone into the production of the experience across so many sites. It will raise the profile of Petworth's heritage for quite some time.”

Burton Mill

“Wow, I’ve never been to Petworth House so that little visit was great, the kitchens are always my favourite part. I have also driven past the mill and not stopped to look so that’s also brilliant. Such quality, you can zoom in to the detail easily.”

Feedback from a member of the public who used the virtual experience during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020.

The outcome

The project created a virtual 360 heritage experience, which can be monitored for use to understand levels of engagement, and which has the potential to grow with additional content and sites.

It can also be used as a promotional tool to support the marketing of future Heritage Open Days.

Furthering this concept, Petworth CIC are exploring the potential for the digital experience to be used as part of a project to revamp a historic telephone box in Petworth into a visitor information point. This project is currently being explored by Petworth Town Council.



The future

Petworth Vision CIC had a firm vision for what they wanted to achieve, and were able to clearly articulate how the funding would be used – the creation of a digital product would be a long term investment in Petworth heritage attractions.

It is hoped that the virtual tour will build additional capacity and support for Heritage Open Days and that a similar digital approach can be applied to future projects in the local area.

“The Virtual Experience is an excellent asset for the heritage sites across Petworth. It has provided an accessible platform for people to gain an insight into the history of the town, not only while they cannot visit during lockdown but also for those who may not be able to visit due to financial, geographical or access restrictions...”

The National Trust

For more information regarding Cultural Heritage in the South Downs National Park, please contact: anooshka.rawden@southdowns.gov.uk

Cultural Heritage Lead, SDNPA

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The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2020–25 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 4.1: Increase conservation, awareness, access to and understanding of South Downs cultural heritage

Outcome 10.2: Increase awareness and desirability of the South Downs as a special place to visit

southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/