

## Destination Montgomery

Project Title:	<b>RDP021: Destination Montgomery</b>		
Delivered by	Destination Montgomery (Steering Group)		
Start date:	March 2017	End Date:	May 2021
LEADER Theme:	1 – Adding value the Local Identity and Natural and Cultural Resources		

Total Expenditure:	£62,285.64
RDP Funding:	£40,400.01
Match funding:	£12,885.63

### **1. Introduction**

The overall aim of the project was to add to the sustainability of the town, which relies heavily on tourism for its income by:

- Increasing visitor footfall to the town
- Encouraging those who visit the town to stay, or stay for longer
- Develop Montgomery's offer to include structured activities, based on the natural and built heritage of the area
- Provide opportunities for SMEs within the town to develop
- Encourage start-ups to meet currently unmet needs

A number of actions were planned in order to achieve these aims:

#### **Employment of a Development officer**

The project employed a Development Officer to co-ordinate activities encouraging increased tourism and promote awareness of what Montgomery offers as a destination. The development officers remit included achievement of the following specific outcomes:

- Development of Montgomery as preferred wedding and celebration venue.
- Development of Town Hall offer
- Events – development of a programme of attractions and events.
- Sustainable tourism project.

#### **Development of Montgomery as a unique wedding venue**

The Town and surrounding area provides a unique opportunity for those seeking a wedding that differs from the commercial and corporate packages on offer from hotels and conventional wedding venues, or something more than a "Community Centre" experience.

Weddings would provide an opportunity to increase day and overnight visitors as well as giving a number of existing and new local businesses a source of income.

#### **Development of Town Hall Offer**

The Georgian Town Hall dominates the centre of Montgomery and is a key part of the brand image. The building has traditionally been at the heart of community activity and cohesion since it was built

in 1748. In addition to existing uses of this venue, including weddings, there is scope for further development, and the added value this would bring to the local economy is a key focus of the project.

The Town Hall provides an attractive facility in which to undertake a number of events. However, it will be significantly improved in its development as a successful performance venue by provision of better access and disabled toilet facilities, along with improved acoustics, in order to satisfy the standard of expectation of modern audiences.

There is also scope to develop the Town Hall further for use as a training / conference venue and this would offer an opportunity for local SMEs to offer hospitality and other services for such events.

### **Development of a Programme of attractions and events**

Over recent years a programme of events has developed. Many of these community focussed events, such as the Summer Street Fair are run entirely by local volunteers and attract significant visitor numbers; others, including for example, musical performances of the highest international standard, encourage a different type of visitor to the town. However, these have developed in an ad hoc way, so that there may be a number of events held fairly closely together, and some significant periods where there are no events at all. The project would support the co-ordination of these events to ensure there a more even spread throughout the year, and work on bringing in additional events which would attract different types of audiences / visitors and complement the other developments. This would include specialist walking / cycling festivals, and also at least one larger prestigious event, (e.g. a re-enactment of the Battle of Montgomery)

### **Sustainable Tourism Project - 'THE MONTGOMERY TRAILS'**

This element builds on work already begun and develop it in a more cohesive and collaborative way; some cycle trails, and walking trails currently exist, having been developed by two separate groups and promoted separately. The project would encourage active outdoor tourism by bringing the walking and cycling trails around Montgomery together and also introduce new trails with a specific theme.

The project will co-ordinate existing information, and develop new trails, branded for specialist interest, e.g. heritage walking trails around the town; environmental walking trails around the surrounding countryside, linked to Offa's Dyke; family friendly walks and some for experienced hikers seeking a more challenging activity. This would be repeated for the cycling trails, including, given Montgomery's hilly location, the opportunity to develop e-bike hire to complement the existing small scale bike hire. It is envisaged that eventually there would be a link to public transport, offering short (1 -2 hour) trails as well as longer ones.

The emphasis would be on developing Montgomery as a place to stay, and extending the visitor profile (currently mainly adults in their middle years) to include more family visitors and older people. As well as improving the visitor offer, these trails would also provide activities for local residents, benefiting their health and well-being.

## **2. Challenge**

Destination Montgomery faced a few challenges during the course of the project:

1. Local Resistance to change



This challenge was identified prior to the commencement of the project as a potential barrier to achieving many of the project aims.

2. Encouraging local community groups, events committees and organisations to work together in a cohesive way
3. Communication and dissemination of information
4. Branding

### 3. Solution

Solutions to the challenges above were as follows:

Timely and effective consultation and communication:

- The establishment of the steering group, made up from members of the community, local business owners and council committee members ensured objectives were met, reviewing these where necessary; Development Officer priorities were set and methods for consultation and communication were instituted.

Liaison, support and communication – via website, news team and development officer using CRM system, social media, tourism networks and traditional press:

- A website team was created to design and implement a new town website to provide a platform for information about Montgomery in general, events, community groups and local services.
- The News & Events team was also formed as a hub to manage the flow of information to stakeholders, participants and the wider community. One of their first actions was to create a Montgomery facebook page and a list of contacts at relevant publications.
- A CRM system was set-up to hold details about local businesses, groups and other individuals in order to provide information on the project and other relevant news or data.
- A number of tourism networks, such as Mid Wales Tourism, were joined as a way of promoting Montgomery and larger events on a wider scale.
- The development officer worked closely with a number of events committees and other local community groups and organisations, providing a point of contact so information was easily shareable. Also by working with and supporting local businesses encouraging joint working in order to strengthen their offer.

Producing a recognisable ‘umbrella brand’ that could be used to promote Montgomery:

- A professional graphic designer, who is based in Montgomery, was utilised to create an overall style that could be applied to a variety of promotional methods from print to social media. This meant that any and all promotion of the town as a whole, individual events or promotional items would be easily recognisable and consistent.

### 4. Benefit

The instigation of the solutions to the challenges has provided long term methods for ongoing promotion of Montgomery and what it has to offer.

- We now have an established website and team to manage it
- The News-Events team are embedded and able to promote activities and publicise information
- The Montgomery brand has been embraced and provides a means of promoting the town in a consistent manner.



## 5. Result

The networks that have been created have established the foundations for joint working across the community and are able to promote Montgomery in a clear and recognisable way across all types of media in the long term. Opportunities for extending the programme of events, especially in the refurbished Town Hall, have been developed and undertaken. The series of walking and cycling trails have proved to be popular and these elements, along with closer working practices between and the promotion of businesses, attractions and events has provided the opportunity for more and different types of visitors to the town in and out of traditional holiday seasons.

## 6. Project Outputs/Outcomes

Output (Case Level Indicator)	Agreed	Achieved
No. of feasibility studies	0	0
No. of networks established	1 overarching + 3 subgroups	1
No. of jobs <u>safeguarded</u>	(10)	0
No. Of pilot activities undertaken / supported	0	1
No. of community hubs created	0	0
No. of stakeholders engaged	8	16
No. of participants supported (awareness raising events only)	200	84
<b>Outcomes</b>		
No. of jobs created	1	0.67
No. of communities benefitting	1	7
No. of businesses benefitting	30	5

## 7. Project Contact Details

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