



TALGARTH

Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and Strategy



Created by Hidden Britain
For the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
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1. Executive Summary

In June 2013, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority commissioned Hidden Britain on behalf of Talgarth to develop a sustainable tourism strategy for the destination as part of the Rural Alliances Programme.

The product of a review of the current situation, research and a series of consultation events, this strategy sets out the direction for tourism as well as an action plan for its implementation and consideration of the organisation and structure behind the scenes.

Vision for the destination

“By 2018, Talgarth will be a vibrant hub and a great base for exploring the Brecon Beacons National Park. But despite the fantastic surroundings, visitors will choose to explore and enjoy Talgarth for its own merits. They will make the choice to discover its landscape and variety of activities, immerse themselves in its wealth of heritage and authentic experiences, take part in colourful and engaging festivities and encounter a truly warm welcome that will bring them back again and again.”

Priority aims

- To increase the economic benefit from tourism to Talgarth's community
- To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel
- To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism
- To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth
- To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination

Key Audiences for the destination

→ Mill Visitors

An audience who come to Talgarth solely to visit the Mill, they stay for short periods and enjoy the heritage, food and opportunity to meet friends.

→ Softer Activity Users

An audience firmly at the "amateur" end of the activity scale, they value the open spaces, support facilities on offer and other facets (e.g. heritage) as a counter-point to the activities themselves

→ Middle Class Couples

An audience comprising an older demographic with more disposable income and leisure time, but have a wider cultural interest and are less seasonally sensitive.

→ Self-sufficient Tourers

An audience based around a self-sufficient style of travelling, generally with caravans. They are value sensitive and appreciate services catering for their needs and are somewhat seasonal.

→ Day Visitors

A short stay audience looking for fun and relaxation. They value the fresh air, sense of adventure but are not driven by the activity itself. They are very seasonal and largely from a local area.

→ **Special Interest Groups**

Groups or individuals travelling for a specific interest and valuing access to support for their interest. Specifically including bird watchers, photographers and artists.

→ **Enablers & Influencers**

Not a visitor audience per se, but rather an extended network of facilitators who can help Talgarth reach their audiences, including media, bloggers, booking agents, partners etc

Priority Actions for Year one

- Develop the Alliance to be representative of interests and effectively manage tourism within Talgarth
- Redevelop the Talgarth Website to provide a clear and focussed presence for the visitor prior to arrival
- Develop and coordinate an events calendar to showcase the wealth of festivals and events in Talgarth
- Build on existing visual identity work and rollout a consistent and credible Talgarth Brand
- Develop a coordinated marketing plan allowing all the interests in Talgarth to work in promoting the destination and its offer
- Investigate options and ideas for providing information outside of TIRC opening hours

2. Introduction

Background

This document is designed to provide a guiding framework that Talgarth as a destination can draw on to develop and manage their visitor and tourism activities. It provides the starting points, themes, vision and principle understanding of tourism in Talgarth, and by doing so aims to identify the priorities for action and elaborate on what needs to be done in the short and medium term to ensure Talgarth punches above its weight in terms of visitors and the visitor economy .

More specifically this document is intended to enable Talgarth to:

1. Develop a common goal and vision
2. Understand the destinations and their offer.
3. Identify the areas of priority for action.
4. Build and develop resource to ensure the strategy becomes reality

Strategy all too often is a byword for weighty tomes that gather dust on shelves, the following pages will not comprise thousands of words for the sake of it, instead, it has been written and is intended to be a tool Talgarth can and will actually use.

Why do we need to address tourism?

Simply put; tourism matters. Nationally Tourism is worth in the region of £97 billion to the UK economy. It also supports direct jobs, in-direct jobs and in the case of rural areas makes a significant contribution to the retention of services, viability of businesses, the conservation of tradition and heritage as well as keeping communities vibrant and enticing places to live and work.

Of course one of the big challenges is that this is a crowded market space and a seat at the table is not guaranteed by any means. There are some big challenges facing the smaller and off the beaten track destinations; visitors are increasingly deluged with choices and options, the larger honeypots shout louder, information is often scarce and the inherent characteristics of villages and rural communities mean they all too often offer exactly the same thing and struggle to gain attention.

Destination profile

This strategy focuses on the town of Talgarth but also includes the surrounding villages and hamlets including; Bronllys, Trefecca, Pengefnffordd, Three Cocks, Felindre and Tregoyd.

Talgarth lies 9 miles east of Brecon on the A479 and bypassed by the A438 which continues onto Hay on Wye 8 miles further on. The town sits at the foot of the Black Mountains within the Brecon Beacons National Park. Key attractions are the natural environment, including Pwll-Y-Wrach and the Black Mountains, access to outdoor activities (especially mountain biking), Talgarth Mill and the historic buildings and churches in the surrounding area, and an extensive programme of events and festivities.

Guiding Principles

This Strategy and the development of tourism in Talgarth as a whole is guided by the following principles that underpin all the actions and objectives.

Responsible Tourism

The term “Responsible” is used in preference to “Sustainable” in terms of tourism, in order to build in the key notion of accountability and responsibility. All plans require action and all actions have impacts. By taking responsibility for and understanding these we aim to build a plan that minimises impacts, generates maximum benefit, gives a voice and power to local people and makes a positive contribution to Talgarth, whilst still ensuring a quality experience for the visitor.

Shared action and benefit as a "Destination"

A key principal of the approach is that we consider Talgarth as greater than the sum of its parts, as a destination rather than a collection of businesses and experiences, and that all the interests should work alongside one another for mutual benefit. In order to deliver a Destination strategy, there needs to be real and effective partnership working between and across everyone with a stake in tourism, and a willingness to act together to see change occur.

Destination Management

Developing tourism is about more than just promotion, the scope includes developing the local tourism structure, gaining insight into visitors and audiences as well as maintaining and enhancing the experience. Destination Management is the process that brings all these strands together in a cohesive way and ensures tourism truly benefits the destination. This strategy includes actions and consideration on all aspects of tourism, not simply making things look and sound nice.

Research and Market Intelligence

Good quality research and data is vital for any tourism strategy; to inform decision-making and investment choices and to measure the change and impacts of any work undertaken. It is vital that the actions contained within this strategy are based on and embedded in sound research and planning prior to implementation and that the measurement, evaluation and monitoring continues throughout its lifespan.

Process & Methodology

In order to create this strategy Hidden Britain worked closely with key stakeholders in Talgarth to ensure not only a useful and workable plan, but also that local needs and desires were placed clearly within the strategy from day one.

The overall process comprised the following stages:

- **Assessment of the current situation and identification of priorities**
- **Engagement with the communities, businesses and local interests**
- **Development of overarching strategy, priorities and actions for delivery**
- **Initial support to Talgarth in implementing the strategy**

Research, workshops and analysis was undertaken between July and October 2013. Stakeholder engagement was built in at various stages of the process to ensure the strategy and subsequent action-plans were representative, and the process gained the buy-in of and ownership by the local communities with a view to developing a longer term "Rural Alliance" in the area.

3. Situational Analysis

Communications & marketing

- Easy to find information on Talgarth on search engines
- Visible brand and logo in evidence, but not used consistently
- Talgarth website contains some of the info a visitor needs in less than 3 clicks
- Plenty of good content across the web (videos / images / tangential 3rd party sites)
- Great response to contact via the website (although potentially confusing as signposts to another site for information)
- Lots of good downloadable content available, interpreting Talgarth for a visitor
- Confusion over which is the official visitor website as the TIRC site competes as does the local authority site
- Site is uninspiring and bland in contrast to other destinations of a similar nature
- No clear articulation of offer or reasons why a visitor would come (appears disjointed)
- No social media presence at a destination level
- Very little in terms of coordination and communication in how Talgarth is presented to the wider world (and very few linkages to the main site.
- Key information missing from the main website

Visitor Experience

- Town was relatively clean & tidy, with clear efforts made to maintain appearance, although some tired street furniture and litter in certain areas
- Good range of shopping / retail for size of destination
- Everything within reasonable walking distance
- High level of welcome and customer service
- Good level of service and information available in TIRC
- Car park was well maintained and plentiful capacity
- Toilets average at best
- A number of vacant units at key locations and several tired and run-down looking buildings
- Better and more visitor information and interpretation needed at key points of the town – especially outside opening hours of the TIRC
- Signage not as clear as could be especially in relation to parking

Organisation and Delivery

Talgarth had come together under the previous BBNPA managed Collabor8 project as the "Destination Talgarth" group and had created a tourism strategy and action plan in 2010. This plan was based on the following key objectives:

1. Strengthen the identity of Talgarth
2. Improve the quality of the product
3. Encourage visitors to stay longer
4. Boost confidence locally
5. Promote local distinctiveness

6. To join things up for the visitor
7. To generate more income for the local economy
8. Strengthen links with nearby destinations
9. Strengthen joint working and collaboration

The strategy recommended a number of actions which have led to the following work being completed for Talgarth since 2010:

- Development of the new Talgarth Walking Festival
- Support and development of the Talgarth Festival of the Black Mountains
- Development of Mountain Biking Trails and encouraging more cyclists
- Opening Talgarth Mill as a visitor attraction and cafe
- Development of a visual identity and logo for Talgarth
- Installation of banners conveying the identity throughout the town and at key access points
- Creation of local walks booklet
- Creation of town history leaflet map and guide
- Creation of 6 themed itineraries
- Gaining Walkers are Welcome status
- Starting the Witches Pool Challenge team walking event
- Starting Flix in the Stix movie nights at the Town Hall
- Set-up the www.visittalgarth.co.uk website for the town
- Completed a signage study and project and lobbying Highways for improvement
- Completed a visitor survey at Talgarth Mill
- Development of new orientation and information panels
- Continued support and delivery of the Talgarth Information and Resource Centre (TIRC)

More recently the advent of the Rural Alliances programme has seen the development of a new "Rural Alliance" group to oversee and manage tourism in Talgarth. However this group is still in its infancy and at present despite some good work tourism delivery is fragmented and uncoordinated within the destination.

Further there are no really big, well resourced private sector players in Talgarth, the major attraction being the landscape and Talgarth Mill (which it must be said has achieved significant exposure through its development via Village SOS). At present Talgarth Town Council is leading the Alliance however it is a loose grouping at present and there is some reticence in getting involved for fear of overburden of resources and costs. BUT there is enthusiasm to do something and make things happen which needs to be carefully harnessed.

Current Research

Talgarth has some relevant and current visitor research and insight available which is summarised below:

Talgarth Mill Visitor Survey (2012)

- Low response count (31) so cannot be used to draw conclusive trends

- Visitors to Talgarth Mill are largely coming to visit it exclusively
- But on arrival the majority do also visit other sites in Talgarth
- Ambivalent response to potential of a return visit (60/40 split towards yes)
- Passive marketing provides the biggest draw (Village SOS, word of mouth and passing by were listed as motivations to visit by 86% of respondents)
- High level of desire for more in-situ experiences e.g. classes, food trails etc

TIRC visitor numbers

- Numbers provided are patchy and for 2011
- Show enquiries are predominantly in person to the TIRC as opposed to via web or phone

Talgarth Visitor Survey (2008)

- A full visitor survey but with only a small sample (93) so again cannot be considered representative
- Half of all Talgarth visitors stay overnight
- 69% of those surveyed were in the 35-64 age bracket
- 91% arrive by car
- Clear emphasis on couple and small groups amongst respondents
- Predominantly without children
- 82% stayed in non-serviced accommodation and most booked in advance
- Scenery and landscape listed as the main driver for the visit, followed by festivals and events
- Majority of visitors were from outside Wales
- Most were first time visitors
- Only 55% had any significant knowledge of Talgarth prior to arrival
- Half of visits were for 4 hours or less
- High visitor satisfaction rating
- But rated poorly in comparison to Brecon and Crickhowell
- Food, sightseeing, shopping, walking and events listed as top activities

Product Offer

- Accommodation offer is sizeable given the area in question, with a large proportion of serviced options (B&B and hotel) as well as numerous self catering and a significant number of camping and caravan parks. There are also several bunkhouse options for those on a budget.
- Attractions are divided into three key areas; the natural landscape, organised activities, and heritage attractions. Talgarth particularly offers a number of differing activity opportunities including; Horse Riding, Gliding, Canoeing, Mountain Biking and Trekking. There are two nature reserves within easy distance of the town centre. In terms of heritage the key draws are Talgarth Mill, Bronllys Castle, the Howell Harris Museum at Trfeca, Castell Dinas and the Church of St.Gwendoline.
- The surrounding landscape offers numerous walking, riding and hill walking routes with a variety of grades and difficulties (including the Black Mountains Classic route for serious Mountain Bikers)

- There are numerous catering outlets throughout the town, including pubs, restaurants, and cafes. However there is a lack of a higher end offer..
- Local produce is available at the bakeries, butcher and other outlets in Talgarth itself
- Talgarth has a number of key events every year, including; The festival of the Black Mountains, a Harley Davidson Festival each April, a new Walking Festival in May and regular markets and Auctions.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Free Parking → Well known and attended events and festivals (e.g. Walking Festival, Harley Davidson Rally etc) → Talgarth Mill (attraction and awareness) → TIRC - focal information point → Obvious heritage - St Gwendoline's Church, long cairn , castles and Howell Harris → Independent shops - 2 Bakeries and high class Butcher → Easy access to countryside and landscape → Variety of grades and challenges of routes for walkers, cyclists and adrenaline junkies → Focus on and facilities for mountain biking (including the black route) → Waterfall and nature reserves near town centre → Easy access to other areas and activities within BBNP → Compact destination - easily walkable → Male voice choir (visible and public access to rehearsals and events) → Sense of fresh air, space and tranquillity → Uncrowded → A slower pace, bypassed (like the 1950's) → Safe (low crime rate) → Tangible and intangible heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Not particularly central car park → Issues with parking overflow for events and busy Mill days → Physical appearance lets Talgarth down - tatty areas / litter etc → Young people have nowhere to go (loiter in key visitor areas -can be threatening) → Lack of communications between groups in Talgarth → Too many cooks - confused and non-coherent communications → Lack of structure and cohesion behind the scenes in tourism → lack of resources (manpower) to make things happen - same old faces always involved → lack of common and clear message (need better take-up of identity) → Complexity of organisations - overlap of roles and friction → Perception and image for the visitor is confused → lack of leadership for tourism locally → Visitor experience needs development (what can people actually do?) → Public toilets have limited opening hours + lack of awareness they are in centre → Lack of visitor information out of TIRC hours → Underused resources (not making enough of what we have) → Lack of understanding of visitors and their behaviour → Lack of wet weather options and activities
Opportunities	Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Established and existing progress already made in tourism development → Leverage network of local expertise in delivering tourism in Talgarth → Rural Alliances programme providing support and access to potential funding → Dark Skies status for BBNP → BBNPA destination brand initiative → BBNPA explorer function on website → Powys CC proactively pushing a destination based approach → Cluster working in vicinity generates reciprocal opportunities → Community and local destination mindset being embedded in tourism development countryside and through rest of UK → Proactive marketing by Visit Wales within the UK → Exploiting the staycation trend within the UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Apathy, new volunteers and activists not getting involved locally → Local politics and friction between existing groups (competing agendas and overlapping functions). → Dwindling momentum due to lack of cohesive or consistent vision → Reduced public sector funding for tourism development and route maintenance → Recession and economic climate reducing visitor spending power and influencing decision-making → Poor weather and seasonality affecting business → NIMBYism → Loss of key businesses or lack of resource and cash flow amongst businesses
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Strategic Context

Talgarth does not operate alone or in isolation, rather it is part of the wider Brecon Beacons National Park and tourism landscape. Therefore before considering the what, where, how and who of tourism locally there needs to be consideration of where Talgarth fits and what other strategies, plans and priorities may impact on them.

Brecon Beacons National Park

The **Brecon Beacons Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2007-2016** gives the overall framework for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism within the National Park.

The core principles underlying the strategy are:

- Effective partnership working
- Year round growth
- Social inclusion
- Sustainability
- Geographical spread and local distinctiveness
- An integrated destination brand
- Balanced market appeal
- Community engagement

These principles have very much driven the development of this strategy for Talgarth, both because of the need to tie in at a higher level to the wider National Park, but also because they represent the most effective way forward for a smaller destination. Trying to reinvent the wheel or go against the grain of what is happening in the National Park will not benefit Talgarth in the long-run.

This last point is particularly key given the development of the new **Consumer Brand for the Brecon Beacons National Park** due to be made public imminently. This will have a fundamental impact on how the National Park communicates with its visitors and Talgarth's own identity and marketing should develop in line with or indeed to compliment the umbrella brand, thereby giving Talgarth greater reach and potential exposure.

Rural Alliances

The Rural Alliances programme runs from 2011-2015 and builds on the cluster development instigated during the preceding Collabor8 programme. The programme is designed to support the development of long-term local ownership in tourism across the Brecon Beacons, supporting and fostering the cluster model to incorporate all interests locally within the host communities.

This strategy is therefore designed to complement and deliver activity and tactics that will sustainably benefit the destination but also focuses on the method of delivery and management, in line with the development of a rural alliance.

Mid Wales

The **Mid Wales Regional Tourism Strategy** produced in 2011 provides a strategic direction for all partners engaged in tourism in the Mid-Wales region, including Powys. It focuses on how the varied range of partners can better work together across the mid Wales region, a consideration which needs to be carried through even at a local level. The key objectives of the plan are:

- To organise tourism resources in the most effective manner across the Region;
- To provide the appropriate infrastructure and high quality, sustainable, distinctive destinations, facilities and services, that will encourage more visitors to visit throughout the year, thereby encouraging growth in the visitor economy;
- To encourage more local people to follow and develop worthwhile careers in the tourism industry;
- To maximise opportunities for tourism development with and between different agencies.

Powys County Council as a key player in Mid Wales have recently been active in developing their visitor facing services, including redevelopment of their consumer website and the instigation of a dedicated 2 year consumer facing tourism social media campaign. Similar to the BBNP consumer brand above this represents opportunities for Talgarth to engage with wider partners and extend their reach if they can move quickly to work more cohesively as a destination.

Visit Wales

Partnership for Growth: The Welsh Government Strategy for Tourism (2013-20) focuses on five key areas which have been integrated into this plan:

- Promoting the brand
- Product Development
- People Development

- Profitable Performance
- Place Building

Of these the last is most fundamental to Talgarth and which directly supports the rural alliance model of local development being undertaken. The detailed aspirations under this area are:

1. Developing destinations that people want to visit and recommend
2. Providing opportunities for local communities to deliver memorable visitor experiences
3. Promoting improved transport links by air, sea, road and rail

It will be difficult for Talgarth to work on an everyday basis with Visit Wales directly given the disparity in scale, however there are always opportunities to interact and engage through larger partners but also directly in terms of marketing. Most specifically Talgarth can interact via social media, by providing editorial content or by simply making sure local listings are up-to-date on the VW website.

4. Strategic Direction

Vision

The first step in defining the strategy is articulating the end goal, what we wish the strategy to help us reach and achieve. Therefore the strategic vision for tourism in Talgarth is:

“By 2018, Talgarth will be a vibrant hub and a great base for exploring the Brecon Beacons National Park. But despite the fantastic surroundings, visitors will choose to explore and enjoy Talgarth for its own merits. They will make the choice to discover its landscape and variety of activities, immerse themselves in its wealth of heritage and authentic experiences, take part in colourful and engaging festivities and encounter a truly warm welcome that will bring them back again and again.”

Mission

Given the existing progress and activity but also baring in mind the current rather uncoordinated structure and approach to tourism it is also worth articulating a guiding mission statement, one that outlines just how we will approach making the vision a reality.

“Making the choice to really work as an effective alliance across the destination, bringing the ethos of coordination and partnership to everything we do. Having an encompassing view so we know what others are doing, planning before doing, pooling resources, combining efforts and changing perceptions so Talgarth as a whole can become greater than the sum of its parts”

Aims

In order to deliver the vision we require battle plans to dictate the overall direction, therefore the key priority aims for Talgarth are:

- 1. To increase the economic benefit from tourism to Talgarth's community**
Get visitors spending more, and ensuring that spend benefits Talgarth, sustaining its businesses and creating jobs and opportunities
- 2. To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel**
Sustaining work developed so far, expanding on it and showing a proactive presence for tourism development in Talgarth
- 3. To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism**
To take a pro-active view as to how tourism is managed and delivered in Talgarth and to work collectively to improve and grow the opportunities.
- 4. To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth**
To expand what we offer, to encourage visitors to stay longer, appreciate the qualities and experiences and improve local perceptions

5. To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination

To put Talgarth on the map as a destination in its own right, to breed familiarity by adopting a consistent and powerful approach to its marketing and promotion

Strategic Objectives

If the aims are the battle plans then the strategic objectives form the tactics we actually use in order to make the plans a reality. Because the aims are by definition broad there are several key objectives nested under each aim as follows:

1. To increase the economic benefit from tourism to Talgarth's community

- a. Increase the spend per head from visitors at local businesses
- b. Sustain jobs locally and provide opportunities for growth and employment
- c. Encourage new businesses to locate in Talgarth
- d. Retain existing businesses, facilities and services

2. To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel

- a. Support the continued development of existing initiatives
- b. To continuously review, monitor and evaluate progress
- c. Retain and grow existing partnerships and relationships
- d. To plan and source a sustainable funding or revenue stream

3. To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism

- a. Improve communications locally between the key stakeholders
- b. Build a visible presence locally for the "Rural Alliance"
- c. Engage the private sector further in planning and delivery
- d. Change perceptions and get people in Talgarth caring about and taking pride in their place
- e. Encourage more members of the community to get actively involved in the process

4. To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth

- a. Increase the breadth and depth of the visitor product and experience in Talgarth
- b. Increase the length of visitor stays in the area, be that for a full day, overnight or longer
- c. Improve the physical appearance of the town
- d. Make more of the assets Talgarth has; interpreting and raising awareness of their importance and encouraging increased interaction.

5. To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination

- a. Build a more consistent usage of the existing identity
- b. Increase awareness and action amongst the key audiences of Talgarth in its own right
- c. To position Talgarth as a key element of the BBNP offer and a "must see" visit
- d. Develop a cohesive and consistent approach from all stakeholders to the marketing and promotion of Talgarth

5. Key Audiences

Whilst many destinations feel they can offer "something for everyone" in reality for a small destination operating with limited resources this often translates into a generic approach that fails to be meaningful. Therefore Talgarth needs to target and focus its attention and work on several key audiences.

These audiences have been selected and prioritised based on a number of factors:

- Fit with the destination strengths, products and location
- Ability to reach and influence effectively
- Relevance to the strategic objectives of the destination
- Fit with the defined target audiences for the Brecon Beacons National Park as a whole
- Potential and scale of audience

Whilst all the identified audiences are key, some represent easier and more attractive targets than others, they are therefore segmented into primary and secondary tiers of priority. Second tier audiences are still key but may be smaller in scale or require most resources to reach effectively for the return they bring. It does not mean they should not be disregarded.

Fuller details of all the audiences are included on the audience map in appendix 2

Primary Target Audiences

Mill Visitors

An audience who come to Talgarth specifically to visit Talgarth Mill and the Bakery/Cafe. They are largely motivated by passive means (WoM, passing by or the Village SOS effect) and stay for a short period only. The value the quality of the food, atmosphere and historical interest at the mill and are likely to return and recommend. Whilst they do not plan to visit beyond the Mill, they frequently do on arrival and are enticed by similar options to explore and engage with heritage and authentic experiences as part of their day out. They are likely to come from a local area or to be staying locally.

Softer activity users

An audience defined by the activities they undertake, which is key to their experience. However these people are at the "amateur" end of the scale and are likely to be motivated by activities being part of the general character of the destination rather than on access to a specific route or experience. They seek out activities offering ease of access, varying scales of challenge and look for good information and advice en situ (as they are less likely to pre-plan). They are likely to travel in groups or as couples without children, and generally on a long weekend or week long break. They value the fresh air, open spaces, support facilities on offer and other facets (e.g. heritage) as a counter-point to the activities themselves. They have the potential to use Talgarth as a hub or a base for visiting wider.

This audience correlates somewhat with the "Outdoor Activist" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy although with a wider interest beyond the activity itself.

Middle Class Couples

An audience comprising an older demographic with more disposable income and leisure time. They are looking for softer outdoor experiences, but also value the cultural and wider heritage options that interpret the experience. They are likely to visit on short breaks and will be mobile around the area in question and are not necessarily sensitive to seasonality. They value quality, distinctive experiences, local produce, service and value (but are not overly price conscious). In Talgarth they are prime Mill visitors and event goers but are likely to only visit Talgarth for a short period as part of wider tour (e.g. Hay, Abergavenny etc).

This audience correlates well with the "Freedom Seeker" and "Active Senior" groupings identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Self-sufficient Tourers

An audience based around a self-sufficient style of travelling, generally with caravans. They will generally comprise families with children of school age or older or middle aged couples. They are somewhat seasonal (Easter to October) but with a generally more adventurous bent are not weather dependant. They value the quality of sites and pitches, and services that cater for their specific needs (e.g. self catering supplies). They will be looking for easily accessible and child friendly activities but whilst they will use their pitch as a static base are likely to explore extensively in the local area by car.

This audience correlates somewhat with the "Families" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy but with a stronger emphasis on self-sufficiency.

Day Visitors

An audience based around a more local demographic to South Wales and the Midlands often travelling in family groups. This audience is drawn by particular aspects (e.g. the Mill, softer outdoor activities, picnic by the river etc) but the primary drivers are fun and relaxation with an emphasis on value. They have a lower amount of disposable income than other groupings and are also more strongly seasonal, with peaks in presence during good weather and school holidays. Whilst nominally day visitors this audience do have the potential to stay in the area but prefer to do so under their own steam (i.e. camping and caravanning).

Secondary Target Audiences

Special Interest Groups

This audience is less homogenous, in that it will defines groupings that come together around a single point of interest. In the Talgarth area this is likely to be; genealogy, crafts, artists and photographers primarily but may of course extend to others. They are driven by their interest and will construct an experience around the pursuit of it. Spend in terms of the interest itself is of less a concern although they will be more price sensitive to ancillary spend (food/accommodation etc).

They value access to the experience and the ability to extend it and will look for service and support in how they do so.

This audience correlates well with the "Other special Interest" grouping identified in the Brecon Beacons Tourism Marketing Strategy.

Influencers & Enablers

This audience are not visitors per se , rather they represent conduits to reach the key audience groupings and include journalists, media, bloggers and membership organisations amongst others. Given the need to raise awareness of the Talgarth product this audience itself is extremely valuable to the destination. However they are looking for interesting, unique, different and essentially saleable ideas, stories and experiences to convey to their readerships. They will value hands on taster sessions, escorted and organised visits and a behind the scenes, rarefied perspective of the destination and its story.

Although the above audiences have been identified as the main targets with long term potential, this does not mean that other potential visitor markets should be ignored. In particular, Talgarth should continue to seek exposure through the marketing and work pursued and identified by the Brecon Beacons National Park as a whole.

6. Actions

This section takes the aims and strategic objectives of the strategy and identifies areas of action required to achieve each of them. To do so the actions focus around 4 of the key priority areas which will in turn deliver against all the aims of the strategy.

- 1. To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel**
- 2. To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism**
- 3. To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth**
- 4. To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination**

These are still broad areas, and further work has been done to distil down and specify the actions required to deliver these priorities and in turn contribute to the overall needs of Talgarth as a destination. These actions are summarised in table 1 below and shown in detail in appendix 1.

1. To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel	
1.1	Identity & branding
1.2	Support existing events and festivals
1.3	Publications
1.4	Research and understanding
1.5	Physical improvements to Talgarth
1.6	Signage

2. To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism	
2.1	Development of a lead body to coordinate and provide management
2.2	Engage stakeholders
2.3	Review and Monitoring

3. To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth	
3.1	Information
3.2	Interpretation
3.3	Events & Experiences
3.4	Skills & training

4. To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination	
4.1	Marketing plan
4.2	Online marketing activity
4.3	Offline marketing activity

These actions are not intended to be an exhaustive list; rather they are a starting point addressing the main issues under each priority. It is envisaged that this list will change and evolve as Talgarth takes tourism forward.

However all activities both those specified now and those developed in the future must:

- Work towards achieving our aims and objectives
- Convey our offer and strengths
- Mitigate or circumvent any weaknesses or gaps in our offer and product
- Appeal to our target audiences and inspire them to act

The detailed implementation steps, ownership and timescales required to deliver the current actions can be found in the detailed delivery plan outlined in Appendix 1. It should be stressed that the actions placed therein have been designed to be as cost-effective as possible and include many small and achievable actions that may require time rather than large expense to deliver. It is therefore designed to be a realistic plan that makes the most of what is already occurring amongst the various parties within the destination.

Priority actions, those that need to be undertaken right now are discussed below in the "Taking it Forward" section.

7. Resources & Management

The delivery of the vision and action plan will depend on many factors but possibly the key one is the "who" and "how" of the process.

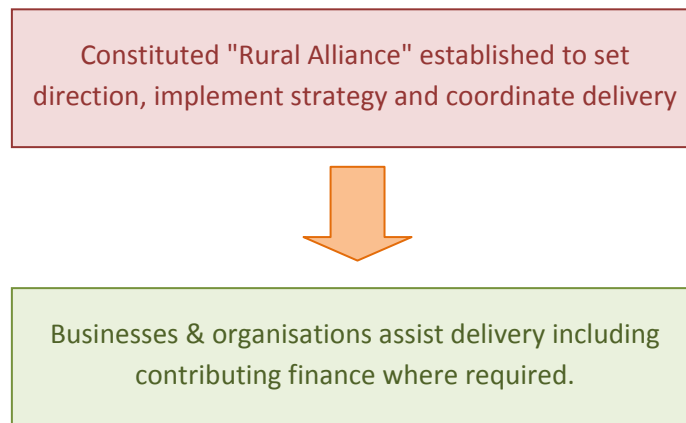
The Need for Change

At present the delivery and management of tourism is based on a loosely organised group under the auspices of Talgarth Town Council. There is nothing wrong with having a loose agreement between a few like-minded people to manage tourism. It makes everything simple, quick and easy. However, it does not always make for a stable and long-term platform, particularly where finances or major decisions are concerned and as feedback has shown it is a lack of a strong coordinating body that has led to some of Talgarth's key challenges.

Therefore there needs to be a change towards a more robust and joined up movement in how tourism is directed, managed and delivered in the area. Equally however there needs to be broad representation and active input from across the destination in a manner that can be sustained over time.

Developing a Rural Alliance?

Developing a strong partnership approach to tourism (a Rural Alliance) may take time, and could take several forms, dependent on the will and the resources available locally. Based on discussion at the workshops in the formation of this plan the following model is suggested.



In this model responsibility is shared between all parties and the current loose group is tied together somewhat more formally (with a constitution and elected officers for example) to direct and manage the development of tourism in Talgarth. This entity can function on several governance models from a simple constituted group up to and including a social enterprise or Community Interest Company.

Here the Town Council is an equal member along with businesses, interest groups and other organisations , as well as interested individuals.

The model formalises the current set-up and enables it to have the specific purpose, structure and stability to successfully work on behalf of all stakeholders. This avoids political or other outside factors impacting on delivery but does require commitment from a few key members to provide the time and resource needed to manage the entity. Finding and retaining new contributors is therefore key.

There needs to be specific clarity built into the terms of reference of the Rural Alliance, the members need to sign up to not only steering, but also understanding the full scope of their input, from decision making to delivery.

Who should be involved?

The alliance can and should have a broad base of membership, however in the first instances the formation will need be driven by the existing alliance members and the Town Council.

Initially approaches should be made to established groups with an overlapping remit to look at potential for merging or revising an existing group rather than building another from scratch. These groups could include; Talgarth regeneration Group, Chamber of Trade and Walkers are Welcome.

Role of BBNPA

The key role of the BBNPA is to facilitate the ongoing process as the alliance develops, to be the critical friend monitoring development as it begins building momentum and becomes established.

In the short term this means the BBNP will need to support the current group in setting up the structure and engaging the right people. In the medium term the BBNPA will need to provide expertise, advice and guidance, enabling the Alliance to ensure that the development of tourism in Talgarth is complementary with the development of tourism amongst other clusters and in the national park as a whole.

Specifically, it is likely that BBNPA will need to be integral in the development (although not the direct deployment) of the strategy and several of the key actions where they overlap and integrate with their wider work.

In the longer term BBNPA can focus more on advocacy for the Talgarth Alliance and encouraging membership, joint working and participation within relevant businesses and organisations at a wider level.

8. Monitoring & Evaluation

Indicators

Ascertaining impact of actions is a crucial part of implementing a strategy. However although monitoring and data collection should be robust and as comprehensive as possible it should not be onerous or overly time consuming. With that in mind we suggest the following indicators which should be applied against the priority aims to understand change and impact.

Whilst most of the below measures will be looked at annually the data should be collected quarterly (at least) to gain an indicator of trends and seasonality.

To increase the economic benefit from tourism to Talgarth's community

- Estimates of visitor spend per head from local businesses
- Visitor numbers at attractions and main activity providers
- Occupancy levels at accommodation providers
- Numbers of repeat bookings.
- Business performance and satisfaction measures

To build on progress and avoid re-inventing the wheel

- Existing projects and programmes sustained or re-launched
- Resident satisfaction with tourism levels and visitor impact
- Approval rating of destination level activities by stakeholders
- Resident perceptions and confidence levels around Talgarth as a place to live and work

To develop a coordinated and effective approach to management of tourism

- Number of stakeholders engaged with destination alliance
- Number of business collecting and sharing data and research
- Funds raised or secured for tourism development purposes
- Number of businesses/stakeholders/volunteers engaged with

To build and improve the quality, experience and product in Talgarth

- Proportion of visitor satisfaction with their visit
- Length of average visitor stay
- Proportion of positive reviews and recommendations
- Take-up or usage of interpretation material
- Levels of litter at key sites and state of repair on key routes and facilities
- Performance in mystery visit studies relative to previous

To raise awareness and build the profile of Talgarth as a destination

- Visitor origin and motivation data
- Attendance at events
- Unique visitors and click-thrus on website
- Enquiries and take-up of publications at TIRC
- Growth in social media networks

→ Number of advance bookings taken by accommodation and activity providers

Monitoring

The indicators above may look like a lengthy list to obtain data for, but in reality they are often measures already being collected by businesses or other organisations, or which can be fairly easily collected in and of themselves. They involve a combination of surveys, collection of external data, observation and less formal and structured feedback. Again this may look like a lengthy list but once set-up can be easily implemented on regular basis

1. Destination Visitor Survey

A comprehensive Visitor Survey is an ideal and indispensable tool for assessing visitor behaviour, motivation and characteristics. However as they require around 200 samples to be representative they are also time consuming and often expensive to undertake, and analyse, especially for smaller areas. We suggest therefore undertaking them only every three to five years and seeking out additional resources (local colleges, or Universities, interns etc) to help spread the burden if the cost cannot be met within the destination. Either way it is imperative that surveys maintain consistent question wording and structure so comparisons can be made, both within Talgarth but also with other destinations across the Brecon Beacons.

The following topic areas should be made key:

- Profile of visitors, origin and methods of access
- Motivation and key drivers to visit
- Places visited and activities undertaken
- Satisfaction levels with facilities and service
- Feedback on any problems encountered

2. Feedback and visitor books

Less formal and more qualitative visitor feedback can be obtained by simple customer satisfaction forms held at accommodation providers, activity venues and attractions or even anecdotal comments taken from visitor books. Short visitor surveys or snap polls at key attractions (e.g. Talgarth Mill or TIRC) could also be included. This information should be collated annually as part of the review.

3. TIRC data

The TIRC is a real asset for Talgarth as a destination and as one of the town's key hubs has the potential to collect a great deal of relevant user data and feedback. At a minimum TIRC staff should record all visitor interactions (either face-to-face, phone or email) and if possible make a note of nature of enquiry (within specific categories) and the first few digits of their home postcode. Data should be collated quarterly.

4. BBNPA visitor centre data

Data and information captured at Point of Sale in the Brecon Beacons Visitor Centres should also be collated annually as part of the review process. If possible Talgarth should push for specific criteria

and data to be collected or broken down on their behalf (e.g. number of local leaflets taken, number of specific enquiries on the local area etc).

5. Business feedback and reporting

The primary collectors of information will be the front-line businesses as part of their day-to-day interaction with visitors, taking bookings and following-up with customers. A culture of sharing and data collection needs to be introduced and agreed on an agreed basis so business can collect and report biannually on performance and visitor behaviour. N.b. this may require businesses to ask for and obtain customer consent in order to share the data.

The following areas should be made key:

- Visitor numbers
- Occupancy rates
- Numbers of advance or repeat bookings
- Visitor origin (first five digits of postcode)
- Origin of enquiry (how did visitors hear about them)
- Any feedback or testimonials

6. Business and stakeholder surveys or forum

In addition to regular feedback, the views, perceptions and feelings of businesses and stakeholders themselves should be gauged on an annual basis. This could be achieved by either a short online or self-completion survey, or through discussion at a structured networking event.

7. Mystery visit assessments

To complement the above mystery visit studies should be undertaken preferably twice yearly to ascertain on the ground experience and quality and availability of visitor facilities. These studies can be simply undertaken by volunteers and will only take around 45 minutes to complete.

8. Product audit of local assets and facilities

Additional information on the state of the local product and facilities can be gleaned through the maintenance and twice yearly review of the product audit.

9. Community satisfaction surveys or consultation

It is important to pick up any changes in local reaction to tourism and to gauge the wants and needs of those who host tourism within their communities. Therefore an annual satisfaction survey or consultation opportunity should be held. More frequent community feedback can be gained through complaints received, and inclusion of feedback mechanisms into community development work.

10. Website and online metrics

All online portals and websites should have adequate and robust analytical tools built in (e.g. freely available Google Analytics) and should as far as possible be standardised to allow like for like comparisons. usage data will be recorded in an ongoing manner but should be collated quarterly. Equally social media and review sites which will all have their own internal analytical tools should be monitored regularly and collated quarterly in the updates.

Strategy review

Annual action plans should be prepared based on this strategy. Actions undertaken should be recorded and reported regularly, this could take the form of short quarterly updates and an annual review which would sum up progress over the year and report annual measures against the key indicators.

The entire strategy should be reviewed on a two yearly basis. This review should include consultation with key businesses and other stakeholders in order to refine the strategic direction and take into account new priorities and objectives.

Timing Plan

A timing plan for monitoring and review is included at Appendix 3

9. Marketing Recommendations

The attached action plan at appendix 1 includes numerous marketing actions but overall the approach should be underpinned by a few key ideas which we recommend Talgarth as a destination take forward.

The potential approach

The marketing programme needs to be based on a number of building blocks:

- A few key, high-level shared (brand) values and messages that form the core offer for all the experiences and audiences.

Example: Choice of scale and challenge of great activities in stunning natural landscapes, a wealth of history and heritage you can touch and explore, local food the old-fashioned way, a great place to pause and catch your breath etc .

- A focus on a specific range of audiences and their characteristics, their wants and needs, and the hooks that the destination has that will appeal to them (using the audience map).

Example: Middle Class Couples value distinctive experiences, the chance to try some softer outdoor activities, good local food and a real heritage experience. Talgarth can draw them with the Mill and events and festivals, and retain them with the miles of paths on the doorstep, the options to try a variety of activities, the visible heritage and opportunities to explore easily from Talgarth as a base.

- Clear tools and guidance for all stakeholders on usage of the Talgarth brand and logo so it can be used consistently and easily, but alongside rather than subsuming an individual businesses identity.

Example: Creation of a simple 4 page document that introduces the branding, explains the use of the logo (minimum size, colour of background etc), outlines a maximum two Talgarth typefaces and a colour palette, includes a quick summary of the key elements of the offer and some suggested uses of this all as examples (leaflet, flyer, social media profile, online banner ad etc). To take things a step further it could also include creation of web buttons or pre-sized logos for use in social media to make things easier for stakeholders to use.

- The destination needs a core set of marketing collateral / activity in place, i.e. a single website, social media, print and PR, reflecting the overarching brand values and tailored to the target audiences as a whole. These represent the ongoing "conversations" Talgarth has on a day-to-day basis with its visitors.

Example: Creating a single Talgarth portal website, core suite of leaflets and a destination social media presence that convey the core offer and experiences available, they talk about all the activities, the food , the attractions, the accommodation and the landscape. Content is designed to appeal to all the general wants and needs the target audiences collectively share.

- This continuous "conversation" of core marketing activity is then punctuated with targeted tactical "shouts" to the core audiences (e.g. specific press releases, social media, dedicated pages on website, promotional posters and flyers in local businesses etc). As a starting point these should aim to be seasonal and focus on the key experiences available at that time of year, but can also be used to highlight events or new activities.

Example: Talgarth Treasure Trails! A specific experience targeted at a single audience and referenced specifically in press releases, on the website, through social media and on posters and flyers. However the content is written specifically to appeal to the target audience placed accordingly. Posters/flyers are placed specifically at known family attractions, short viral videos are created showing children exploring (getting muddy, finding creepy places etc), specific media outlets where parents look for half term options are targeted etc...

- A tiered delivery programme so all interests in the destination can participate and contribute to the shared action.

Example: The destination level values and messages are set out in black and white and guidance is supplied so individual businesses can use this as an overarching framework for the own communications, saving them time (with already generated content/images and video) and providing context for their communication (e.g. their special offer for walkers over a bank holiday weekend becomes more powerful if the variety and challenge of routes locally is described and conveyed in a compelling way).

- Implementation of measurements and metrics to track effectiveness of all activity

Example: All print publications feature QR (Quick Response) codes and web links to get more information. These Codes take the user to a specific landing page on the website that is not linked to the main navigation, therefore its likely only those with the leaflet will visit the page, and by looking at web stats, numbers of visitors taking action from usage of the leaflet can be tracked...

Specific tools needed

Of course these are only some simple recommendations to get started with but certain tools and channels will need to be used in order to effectively pursue joint marketing of the destination, which the action plan makes provision for developing:

- A single "front-door" destination website
- Destination level social media for visitors
- A single destination print publication for raising awareness
- Interpretive material such as self-guided walks and itineraries
- A community of businesses willing to interact and cross promote

10. Taking it forward...

The action plan will enable a lot of progress in developing tourism, however it also contains a lot of actions and potential areas of work therefore the following section highlights the areas in our opinion need to be addressed as a priority in order to ensure this approach is effective.

Each of these priority actions is scoped in detail in the priority delivery plan at Appendix 4

1. Develop the Alliance

The vital first stage of developing this plan is to put a solid and sustainable body in place to oversee and manage the delivery of it. To do so will involve bringing several of the overlapping groups in Talgarth together rather than developing an entirely new entity. However this will require a review of terms of reference and any constitution to ensure the resultant alliance is fit for purpose. Once the alliance is in place, the next key step is to engage all the tourism stakeholders of the town and bring them up to speed with the direction and priorities the alliance is taking on. Only by having a common agreement will it be possible to marshal all the concerns to work in tandem and if possible we need to encourage businesses to take an active role in delivery so it is not all public sector and volunteers.

2. Redevelop the Talgarth Website

Review and consider how best to serve visitors seeking information on the destination online, and also how to optimise the existing local web presence ensuring it is enticing, usable and relevant for the visitor. This requires discussions with local website providers and likely designating one site as the “front door” with other sites clearly signing to it and developing a culture where content is developed by multiple users and submitted for inclusion.

3. Build on and rollout the Talgarth Brand and Identity

Distilling and identifying the key assets, values and benefits Talgarth offers, developing a clear differentiating reason for people to come, clearly articulating the brand and developing the core messages. This work sits alongside and adds value to the already developed visual identity, essentially providing context and meaning to it, enabling all to use it and providing the tools necessary to communicate it consistently. If there are experts available locally who can advise and develop these tools then it could be done on a shoestring, however this is a particularly vital piece of the jigsaw so professional help is recommended.

4. Develop a coordinated marketing plan

Utilising the foundations developed under the brand, creating a simple and easy coordinated 18 month plan that provides tools and guidance to all concerns in Talgarth. The plan should dictate the destination level actions - general conversations and specific shouts, as well as making the brand and messages clear for all the businesses and organisations to use in their own marketing thereby supporting the core destination activity. This does not have to be complicated but does need

thought and to be laid out clearly, including a timing plan so everyone knows who is doing what and when .

5. Events Calendar

Actions to initially scope and catalogue the yearly calendar of events and festivals occurring within Talgarth. Ideally this should compile all current year and all upcoming events for the following twelve months. Once scoped to implement a workable method of capturing new events on a regular basis and provide a central point to manage and curate the content. The key element of this action is then to convey this in useful and easily digestible ways to the visitor, likely based on a web application but also looking at methods to provide hard copy to key businesses and potentially an "alert" system to keep subscribers updated.

6. Out of hours info provision

Consider the options to make information available to the visitor outside of TIRC opening hours (and also ensuring availability of information at multiple venues throughout the destination). This element will likely be based on reviewing best practice and ideas from elsewhere, then considering feasibility of implementing them in Talgarth. These could include packaging information to be held at other local businesses (e.g. tear off map pads, leaflet racking, training staff members), extending the functionality of the TIRC (e.g. video screen in the window, use of QR codes linked to main website) or looking at provision of direct out of hours services (e.g. helpline, social media, dedicated information section on website with FAQ's).