



Report for SWWAB September 2013

Introduction

This is the first of the six-monthly reports on the proposed activities under Project Sunrise- Mere and their outcomes, the production of which was a condition of the Grant Funding for 2013/14. This initial period has seen the generation of the necessary policies, rules for authorization of expenses, and the processes for the control of the multiple sub-projects. Progress has been made in delivering the Vision of the project, to attract business to the district by enhancing the links with tourism with the intention that Mere becomes a “destination” in people’s minds, so providing opportunities for increasing trade.

Project Launch Meeting

This was held on 1st May 2013 in the Grove Building in Mere. Over 30 representatives of local businesses and members of voluntary groups came along. An explanation of Project Sunrise-Mere was followed by a review of Mere & District Chamber of Trade activities, both past and projected. Apart from the publicity gained, this meeting provided names and contact details of a pool of people who were willing to be involved. Regular articles in Mere Matters have maintained the connexion with town and people.

Membership

Membership of Mere & District Chamber of Trade had declined over the years and income had reduced at an even greater rate. The decline in membership mirrored the loss of retail outlets in the town. The greater income decline was due to some members who paid by standing orders which had not been updated in earlier years when subscriptions had been increased. A first action under the project has been to review the overall subscription level and collect this from members- none have refused renewal at the new rate, although four standing orders are still to be changed. Three new members have been recruited. There are now 22 members altogether.

Bearing in mind the shift in employment towards small enterprizes, especially single person enterprizes operating from domestic premises, tracing such businesses presents a challenge. Progress is being made in identifying those small businesses which would benefit from membership and the subsequent publicity support which could be provided. Seven other potential members have been identified and will be followed up. For the first time, a Membership Certificate has been designed and will be presented at a networking evening in October.

Relationship with AONB

Four successful meetings have been held with AONB. By involving several Mere cycling and walking enthusiasts we have been able to provide the AONB with 5 cycle routes and 2 walks based on Mere. Two of these have been agreed for publication on their website. Regrettably there is a lack funding to include them all. We are investigating whether Project Sunrise-Mere can separately fund the contractor who was carrying out the digitization of the info. If this can be arranged, the AONB would be able to add all the routes to their website.

Funding of another separate tourism initiative has been a new printing of *Mere Meanders*, a booklet of a self-guided walking tour of significant points in the town. Copies are now on sale at Stourhead and in Mere shops at £1 each. Again, it should be possible to make this available through a web download in the future.

National Trust

A meeting with the Stourhead NT General Manager has resulted in agreement to a co-operative arrangement to publicize Mere events on the Stourhead website. This should provide a significant boost to local organizations and enhance Mere as a destination, bringing business to the Town. The linking of *Information collated on behalf of Mere & District Chamber of Trade, by Hamish Bell, President. (Rev4)*

some walking and cycling routes to include Stourhead, and publicity for local accommodation also adds to the venture.

Art Group Initiative

An initial meeting was held amid an enthusiastic atmosphere. The outcome is that a Working Group has been formed, a website launched, a search for premises for an exhibition space started, and a publicity flyer planned. These activities are both a means of attracting visitors to the area and an opportunity to sell the artists' work.

Signage

A project team is now being formed. This is a long term project involving the national Highways Agency. It is anticipated that there will be significant reluctance on their part to change or improve A303 signs in the way in which we envisage. On the other hand, action to renew Mere Town signs is more promising. A plan is to be prepared and will be discussed with the Parish Council. Links with the Parish Council are already established via two Chamber committee members and another Councilor who has contributed to the AONB relationship.

A website for the project has been set up (www.projectsunrise-mere.org.uk) and contains details of the subprojects and their progress. The policies and processes for the project can also be accessed through the website.

Future Planned Actions

The Parish Church, the Museum, Castle Hill, and other local sites are yet to be reviewed as potential visitor attractions to help make Mere a destination as well as a convenient stopover point for west-bound traffic. Publicity further east, and in London will be investigated. Local accommodation owners will be approached to see if a joint approach can be made to drive up visitor numbers. AONB will be offering hospitality businesses a link to their website as a free marketing opportunity

Outline Financial Information

Committed spend so far has been minimal at just under £1700 as the initial website effort has been donated. Further development is required and will use more of the funds. The majority of spend is made up of administrative support particularly in searching out businesses. There has also been excellent cooperation from businesses in providing accommodation for the meetings with AONB and the Artists group. The Social Club continues to support the Chamber by providing facilities for Committee meetings on a regular basis. The following table includes committed as well as actual spend.

ITEM	INCOME	EXPENDITURE			
Grant from SWWAB	£ 7,000.00				
Website Hosting		£ 47.94			
Mere Matters Advertizing		£ 100.00			
Project Launch Meeting Expenses		£ 100.40			
Project Support Admin		£ 1,230.00			
Mere Meanders Printing		£ 80.00			
Artists' Group Website		£ 95.00			
AONB Meeting Expenses		£ 20.00			
Totals	£ 7,000.00	£ 1,673.34			
BALANCE	£ 5,326.66				

END