Vital statistics

- Greenway, a National Trust garden in Galmpton, South Devon
- Attracted 25,000 tourists in 2003; 60% of visitors arrived by alternative transport
- Initiated partnerships to ensure travel by foot, cycle, river, train and bus

Summary

Greenway Garden is a visitor attraction on the banks of the Dart Estuary. The 30-acre garden is set within a beautiful estate and houses an impressive collection of rare trees and shrubs. Once owned by Agatha Christie, the property was given to the National Trust in 2000. The local authority asked managers at Greenway to produce a travel plan as part of its planning application to give wider public access to the garden. Greenway opened fully in 2002 and attracted 20,000 visitors. A clear travel plan strategy ensured that for the first two years, over 60% of visitors arrived by alternative transport.

This level of alternative travel represents a remarkable success achieved from a standing start. The National Trust fully supports increasing the proportion of visits made by non-car means to its properties. The Trust aims to reduce property visits by car from 90% to 60% by 2020.

Background

The National Trust submitted a planning application to South Hams District Council in 2001 to open Greenway to the general public and Trust members, and for a change of use for existing buildings to accommodate a visitor reception, café and toilets. Roads leading to Greenway are very narrow and pass through a small village. The council was concerned about the potentially large number of cars travelling to the garden and the effect this would have on the local community in terms of congestion, noise and pollution.

Therefore, Greenway was asked to develop a travel plan as part of a Section 106 Planning Agreement. The agreement restricts the number of vehicles admitted to the property and Greenway has to:

- Limit the opening times (Wednesday - Saturday, March - October)
- Give access to no more than 12,800 cars per year and 125 cars per day
- Permit only one coach at any one time and no coaches in excess of 25 seats
The challenge

Greenway had one year to develop a travel plan and start the implementation process before opening the garden. Apart from limiting access by car, the Section 106 Planning Agreement also specified that Greenway should have only one highway ‘tourist attraction’ traffic sign, sited in the village of Galmpton and none on the main road, as a means of discouraging visitors to the property who have not pre-booked.

However, the National Trust calculated that in order for Greenway to become a financially viable tourist attraction, it required at least 40,000 visitors per year. Assuming 2.2 passengers per car, and a maximum of 12,800 cars per year, Greenway would be able to attract 28,160 visitors by car. The travel plan had to encourage and cater for a further 12,000 visitors using alternative means of transport to achieve the required 40,000 visitors.

Additionally, in order to track progress against the conditions of the planning agreement, Greenway has to supply visitor statistics on a bi-monthly basis to the District Council. Failure to meet any of the agreement’s conditions could result in closure of Greenway. This means the travel plan plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term viability of Greenway Garden as a tourist attraction.

The solution

The key to Greenway’s success is working in partnership with others on addressing its transport and travel issues. The Property Manager, Robyn Brown, is responsible for developing and implementing Greenway’s travel plan strategy. Her partnership approach has allowed Greenway to offer tourists a choice of alternative transport options and to attract new visitors that may otherwise not have considered visiting the garden. This has been achieved by:

Foot

The Dart Valley Trail offers 17 miles of walking and links the historic towns of Totnes and Dartmouth with waterside villages. In negotiations with South Hams District Council and the National Trust, the trail was diverted onto Greenway Garden. The National Trust opened private land and the Trust agreed to maintain the new paths; the council agreed to provide the additional signposts and gates. Similarly, the Torbay Dart Link was diverted to create a new footpath through the woodlands of the Garden, which also doubles for the new Galmpton Village Walk.

Cycle

Greenway installed four Sheffield cycle stands at a cost of approximately £500 to cater for visitors that arrive by cycle. On request, reception staff will store bags and helmets for cyclists.

River

Greenway’s close proximity to the River Dart offered an ideal opportunity to make the river journey part of a unique visitor experience. Greenway negotiated with the local ferry operator, Riverlink, to integrate the garden into the ferry cruise from Dartmouth. The ferry has capacity for up to 300 passengers and several cycles, and offers five direct return journeys each day with regular stops at the Greenway quay.

Another operator in the area, the Dittisham Ferry, also agreed to provide a route. The ferry has capacity for 12 passengers and operates between Dartmouth and Dittisham. In peak times the service is doubled to meet demand. The Greenway Ferry operates on demand to and from Dittisham.

In addition, Robyn Brown invited the local canoe day trip company, Canoe Adventures, to integrate Greenway in its programme. Canoe Adventures operates guided Voyageur 12-seat canoes, and for the Greenway Gardens Tour, offers nine adult seats per canoe. As a result, Greenway now has about six parties a year of up to 18 people who land at the Greenway Boathouse, with potential for many more.
Train and bus
Greenway has teamed up with Riverlink to offer the ‘Greenway Hoppa’ bus, linking Greenway to the mainline train station in Paignton (4.5 miles from Greenway) and the Paignton & Dartmouth steam railway line in Churston (2 miles away). Visitors can catch the Hoppa direct to Greenway six times a day. The bus also benefits residents of Churston, who recently had their local bus service withdrawn.

The Greenway circular tour
The changes have linked several local tourist attractions and enable visitors to travel by train to Kingswear, cross over to Dartmouth on the ferry, join the Greenway cruise to the garden and return on the Hoppa to Paignton, making the journey to Greenway part of the visitor’s experience.

Road
Greenway has 72 visitor parking spaces, as well as space for one midi coach. Parking spaces are allocated in 30-minute slots. This allows Greenway to manage the limited number of spaces available and access to the attraction along the narrow country lanes. Vehicles have to be booked in through Greenway’s information line and staff verify the bookings on arrival.

In addition, Greenway has created a monetary incentive to encourage visitors to travel by means other than their car. Members of the National Trust who arrive without a car receive a ‘2 for the price of 1’ voucher for a pot of tea. Non-members who come by car pay an extra 20% on their entrance fee.

Crucial to Greenway’s strategy is providing visitors with comprehensive transport information to allow them to make better travel choices. This is provided through the National Trust’s handbook, which covers all of its properties and is sent to each Trust member (three million members and 77% of visitors to the Greenway Garden). Detailed travel information is also provided in other promotional material, including the National Trust’s regional visitor guide for Devon (disseminated to 500,000 outlets), the Greenway poster, advertisements in local and regional brochures, and the National Trust’s website (www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

The results
From its first day of opening, Greenway has managed to attract a significant number of visitors who use alternative transport. In fact, for many visitors, getting to Greenway is part of the leisure experience.

Greenway’s excellent visitor statistics

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>% alternative</th>
<th>% car</th>
<th>% other***</th>
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<td>43</td>
<td>53</td>
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*Up to June 2004 ***Mode of transport not recorded

The costs of developing and maintaining the travel plan to date have been in the region of £16,000. This covers the Hoppa bus subsidy, landing quay fees, free tea vouchers, Property Manager and administration staff. However, this is seen by Greenway as money well invested, as visitors spend, on average, £5.40 during their average three-hour visit. Visitors also bring additional financial benefits to transport operators and local business.
Limitations

In the implementation of its travel plan, Greenway has encountered a number of issues that need to be monitored and managed:

- Between 2002 and 2004, the Hoppa bus received a subsidy from the National Trust and the Countryside Agency. However, operating costs still exceed the actual revenue, making the future of the Hoppa service uncertain.

- While the travel plan encourages visitors to travel by ferry, the path from the quay is relatively steep and is not suitable for everyone to use. However, the National Trust does not own the quay and will need to negotiate its improvement as well as securing long-term access for visitors.

- In an attempt to control the demand for parking, the booking system for cars has proved successful. Booking in a car usually takes about two to three minutes, however, it can sometimes take as long as 12 minutes.

The future

Greenway will need to attract 40,000 visitors per year in order to secure its financial future and the travel plan will continue to play an important role in this.

There are still many opportunities to improve transport links with other nearby Trust properties. Therefore, working with partners in the area will continue to be a defining element of Greenway’s travel plan.

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