nenevalley

Partnership & Place Development

12th November 2015
GLNP Annual Conference
Introduction

Nene Valley Introduction

Stunning landscape, three times the size of the Great Fens

Aims & Objectives

Why so special?

Home to many different types of wildlife & some of Britain's most spectacular views

Key role to play in stimulating economic growth in this largely rural area

Our partnership, our journey

Partners’ roles & key learnings three years in; establishing a coalition of the willing to develop & promote nenevalley.net

Putting Nene Valley on the map. What works for us

Principles of our approach, online presence is key

Key messages and markets, don’t ignore the home crowd

Forward Look and Questions
Nene Valley Introduction
www.nenevalley.net
Northampton to Peterborough, 3 mile radius
Nene Valley Introduction

Typically English in character the River Nene is considered an under utilised natural asset with a diversity of habitats, makes the valley one of the most important inland localities in England for a range of wildlife including kingfishers, herons, otters and dragonflies.
Nene Valley project currently brings together 16 partners in a project to strengthen the rural economy of the area, improve access, attract visitors and promote healthier outdoor lifestyles.

The project is closely in line with wider economic development, tourism and environmental management policies for Northamptonshire.
Vision

The Nene Valley will be recognised as a destination of choice for world-class wildlife and heritage, with a connected green corridor for walking and cycling and a flourishing tourism economy that creates opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy outdoor recreational activities whilst protecting the environment and wildlife.
Aims

Enhance, communicate and promote the attractiveness of the Nene Valley

Improve access points, establish gateways, enhance visitor information and accommodation provision

Raise awareness of the area and promote sustainable tourism, the environment, economic growth and healthy lifestyles

Protect wildlife and the environment as vital green infrastructure in a developing and growing county

Attract visitors and spend from local and regional markets
Why so special?

Covers more than **41,000 hectares**

**Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area** designation

Breathtaking scenery from the ‘under enjoyed’ River Nene

**Strong heritage** offer

1 hour from London, Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham

**Strong track record in attracting visitors;** 20 million pa, £965 million

**SME economy** covering wide range of sectors including growing food and drink industry base
National context

Visitor spending contributes significantly to the rural economy of England & has seen recent growth

Focus on outdoor activities & experiences as part of day visits & short breaks

Visitor markets need guidance on where to go, with products developed that are in line with their needs & interests

Nene Valley is attractive in national context but not unique

Particular strengths include central location, growing population, ease of access, extensive birdlife & growing walking, cycling & water based product. This is complemented by strong heritage sites
Our partnership, our journey

2012:
Began as a path finding partnership project which aimed to build on existing frameworks
Initial objectives were that the project would:

Guide strategic development to support green infrastructure

Develop a brand that communicates the Nene Valley’s unique identity to visitors

Work with partners to strengthen tourism assets and increase people’s enjoyment of these

Support new and existing tourism businesses locating in the Nene Valley

Identify opportunities to improve social, economic and environmental wellbeing

Work with partners to develop and promote sustainable tourism principles in all activity

Attract funding resources and partners to assist in the implementation of the strategy
Strategy timeline


Implementation started soon after.

Business Plan due December 2015; to strengthen delivery through identifying priorities, improving stakeholder engagement and strengthening governance, resources and management.
Foundation Partners – Strategic Board
How and challenges

Core team reporting to strategic board from Day 1

Limited resource - 3 dedicated days per week plus Comms support

Limited budget - £10k pa

Challenges early days;

- Developing strategy, aims & objectives
- Establishing profile; where to start? Brand and digital
- Agreeing target audience; local & regional
- Buy-in from stakeholders; engaging tourism businesses & public sector, demonstrating value and impact
- Mandate from private sector board members; "Don't just talk, get on and do"
Partners now directly involved with our governance - Strategic Board & Tourism Promotions Board
Delivering our vision 3 years in

Achieved through creating programmes of work & specific crossing projects (e.g. Nene Valley Festival) to exploit synergies between current and planned projects delivered by DNV partners.

This approach maximises the impact of available resources & maintains the sovereignty and momentum already established by existing projects.

**DNV Board takes a strategic approach**, co-ordinating communication and fundraising, and facilitating cross-cutting partnership activity. The **DNV Board no longer seeks to directly manage projects** but liaises with the Project Boards that do.

It also liaises upwards to any county, sub-regional or national organisations with complementary objectives.
Our Current Priorities

The Tourism Company retained in Spring 2014 to help shape priorities:

- Make more of the river itself and integrated wildlife experience
- Build on the success of the 2014 & 2015 Nene Valley Festivals
- Strengthen short break product, incl. set of itineraries linking key elements & themes
- Embed Nene Valley brand & strengthen its presentation & adoption on the ground; develop a Sense of Place Toolkit
- Make more of new infrastructure as it emerges; adding value to important projects e.g. NV Greenway, Rushden Lakes
- Engage local tourism related businesses more actively
- Work more closely with urban gateways; Peterborough, Wellingborough, Northampton
Key learnings 3 years in

**Governance is key;** our own recently refreshed governance expands role & reach overall, focus for main board

**Defined roles & responsibilities, aims & objectives** all important

**Dedicated resource;** despite being invested in the project, partners can be reluctant to take on responsibility

**Be realistic about your product;** its strengths & limitations, & the competition

**Strong creative & imagery, targeted digital activity** key to stretching limited budgets

**Visitor information & signposting** ‘on the ground’ also critical
Putting Nene Valley on the map...

What works for us

Strong engagement with private sector; governance, individual & group meetings, annual stakeholder conference, new private sector led network in 2016. They value in this work.

Prioritising local and regional / London “nice day out” audiences; in national context NV is attractive but not unique, our target remains local and regional audiences within 1 hour drive

Annual Nene Valley Festival; helps not only with profile but also as rallying call for stakeholders. 50 organisations & over 14,000 participants in 2015 (19-27 Sep).

Prioritising digital channels; Website, Facebook & Twitter
100% website traffic increase year on year
30,000 website visits expected in 2015/16, 200 business listings
3,400 Twitter followers
3,300 Facebook followers
Putting Nene Valley on the map...web visits

Website visits per quarter

![Graph showing website visits per quarter from 2013 to 2015 with a steady increase]
Forward Look and Questions

£2.8 million HLF place shaping grant; Nene Valley partner successful in securing £2.8 million HLF place shaping grant for our geography; series of 2017 projects including Festival development & new heritage trails

Lakeside Visitor Centre (new Nene Valley gateway) at Rushden Lakes opening 2017
- 30 acre site
- 380,000 sq. feet retail
- Waterfront restaurants
- Boat House run by Nene Valley partner; Canoe2
- Visitor Centre run by Nene Valley partner; Wildlife Trust

Increased investment; budget from developers & sponsors, time from project partners

Product for niche audiences; including birders
Find out more

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