



2004-2005
Promoting Sustainable Tourism

Strong effective relationships with privately run Tourist Information Centres (TICs)

The six tourist information centres in the South Hams are independently run. To ensure that they can learn from each other, work towards common goals and increase their lobbying potential, they have formed the Association of South Hams Tourist Information Centres (ASHTIC).

One of the goals of ASHTIC is improving and maintaining quality and encouraging the adoption of standards. The reasoning is that if a TIC has to generate all its own income, like any other business in the private sector, they would have to provide a completely satisfactory service to their customers or they would not survive.

The objectives of the Association are:

- *To discuss and develop any matter that affects the promotion and co-operation of information centres within the South Hams and to take action that will improve and benefit any of the Centres*
- *To work together to continually improve visitor information services in the South Hams, by exchange of information, learning from each other and to work with South Hams Tourism to assist in the marketing and tourism development of the area*

Their duties and responsibilities involve:

- *The day to day running of the Association in accordance with statutory requirements*
- *Approving the distribution of the income from joint ventures in conjunction with South Hams Tourism e.g. South Hams Guide*
- *Marketing – the consideration and endorsement of the area's tourism and marketing strategy and associated activities*

- *Involvement in the training of staff as and when necessary*
- *Any other legal activity that will help to promote and develop the centres and tourism generally within the area*

In order to protect the interests of both ASHTIC and the Council, a service level agreement was signed based on the core South Hams Marketing & Tourism Service objective – “To work with the private and public sector partners to improve the competitive position of the South Hams as a quality all year round holiday destination.”

The Council also undertook to “support ASHTIC networking and Internet service development”.

The Council recognised that ASHTIC members are key to the success of area marketing through their influence on the many areas of the strategic marketing mix – price, product, people etc – through their day to day contact with business operators in the district. The network of visitor information services is vital to the Council's marketing efforts. The partnership approach to the South Hams Holiday Guide ensures that key visitor management messages and quality images are portrayed.



The Council agreed to involve ASHTIC in the publication process and to keep members involved in South Hams tourism and marketing activities. In return for assistance with advertising sales and improvements to information services, an income pay out is made to member TICs at the end of the financial year.

The agreement also supports the ASHTIC objective of discussing and developing any matter that affects the promotion and co-operation of information centres within the South Hams and in regard of the duty to consider and endorse the area's tourism and marketing strategy.

ASHTIC agreed to promote and actively encourage sales of advertising space in the South Hams Holiday Guide to their respective TIC business members.

ASHTIC members agreed that monies arising from the Guide pay out are used to improve the quality of visitor information services, retain winter opening and develop IT networking.

Case study: Kingsbridge TIC

21 years ago Kingsbridge TIC was in imminent danger of closing due to lack of funding. A group of four local business people got together to save it. They took over the management on a voluntary basis from the local Chamber of Trade whilst employing professional staff to run the TIC.

They set out to be totally self-financing like any other small business, running the TIC from a caravan in the town's car park.

By the early '90s and after a lot of hard work, enough money was generated and with the help of a grant from the Rural Development Commission, a new purpose designed building

was erected on the Town Square. In 1993 the TIC moved in and then dropped the 'T' from its name to become the Kingsbridge Information Centre providing advice and information to the local community and visitor alike.

This model has been followed with all but one of the South Hams Tourist Information Centres, thus releasing Council funds for use in other areas of tourism and providing the public with well-run and sustainable information centres.

