

Promoting Romney Marsh as a Visitor Destination

This paper sets out the views of the Romney Marsh website *theromneymarsh.net* as to what should be done to increase the number of visitors to Romney Marsh.

Introduction

Romney Marsh is known for its natural beauty, the diversity of its habitats, rich history, extensive coastline and its sheep. With excellent accommodation, outstanding attractions, fine food and drink, varied walking routes and many sandy beaches, Romney Marsh is an ideal place to visit, explore and enjoy.

Its attraction as a visitor destination is undeniable and many, including the Romney Marsh website *theromneymarsh.net*, feel that more needs to be done to utilise these assets, to give a boost to tourism on Romney Marsh, and thus help its economy.

Its many and varied attractions are promoted on an individual but disparate basis, with very little in place to market any of these on a 'joined up' basis, promoting Romney Marsh to the tourism public as a single entity in its own right. There is a distinct lack of co-ordination between stakeholders, including local councils, with no single group/organisation promoting Romney Marsh as a visitor destination.

What Romney Marsh Has To Offer

Romney Marsh has much to offer the visitor:

Sandy Beaches	Land Yachting	Windsurfing
Medieval Churches	Smallest Public Railway	Cycling
Dungeness	Fishing	Historic Inns
RH&DR	Golf	Restaurants
Historic Churches	Museums	Holiday Parks
National Nature Reserve	Royal Military Canal	Bed & Breakfasts
Bird Reserve	Walking	Self-catering

What We Need To Do

1. Establish a Steering Group/Umbrella Organisation – the **Romney Marsh Tourism Partnership** – to develop and oversee a tourism strategy for Romney Marsh.

We need a structured co-ordinated and sustained approach, working to agreed aims and goals, to actively promote and market Romney Marsh as a tourism destination in its own right.

/This group...

This group would comprise of representatives of the key stakeholders ie

Shepway District Council	Visitor Attraction	Romney Marsh Countryside
New Romney Town Council	Holiday Park	Project
Lydd Town Council	Bed & Breakfast	Dungeness Estate
Dymchurch Parish Council	Restaurant/Pub	
St Mary in the Marsh PC	Self Catering	

Note: The Visitor Attraction, Holiday Park, Bed & Breakfast, Restaurant/Pub, Self Catering could be just one or two representatives from the Romney Marsh Tourism Association, see below.

2. Define what we mean by the **area of Romney Marsh**. Romney Marsh means different geographic areas to different people, and different geographic areas depending on the context in which 'Romney Marsh' is used. We need to decide 'what's in' and 'what's out'. The website *theromneymarsh.net* uses the area bounded by Hythe to the north east, Hamstreet to the north, Appledore to the west, Rye to the south east, Camber to the south and the English Channel to the east, covering the post code areas of TN28 and TN29.

3. Create a **Romney Marsh Visitor Brand**, to be prominently located around Romney Marsh and used by all those involved in tourism on Romney Marsh. The name, Romney Marsh, and tag line, The Fifth Continent, are already widely used but these need to be supplemented by a Romney Marsh logo, using a defined colour scheme. (The Romney Marsh website uses blue and yellow)

4. Establish a **tourism/visitor information centre**. The existing Romney Marsh Visitor Centre would seem to be an obvious choice but the potential use/part use of the disused Martello Tower No. 25 in Dymchurch car park should be explored

5. **Co-ordinate the main events** on the Marsh eg New Romney Country Fayre, Lydd Club Day, Dymchurch Day of Syn, JAM etc. This could be done either by the proposed Romney Marsh Tourism Partnership or Romney Marsh Tourism Association.

6. Establish a **Romney Marsh Tourism Association**. Romney Marsh has over 50 holiday accommodation providers, over 25 visitor attractions, over 20 places to eat and over 25 pubs, all, for the most part, dependent upon visitors to the Marsh for their survival.

In general, they all do their own thing in marketing to attract people to visit them. They are just a number of disparate groups all attempting to market their own particular bit with no co-ordination to a common aim between them.

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This had resulted in not enough marketing/advertising to promote the virtues of Romney Marsh. How much better if they were all to get together and work in partnership to promote Romney Marsh and thus themselves? A dedicated organisation to effectively market all of these to the tourism market, to the benefit of us all.

This can be achieved by setting up a *Romney Marsh Tourism Association*, working together to help promote Romney Marsh as a Visitor Destination. It would be a membership organisation from all tourism and related businesses and groups on the Marsh eg attractions, accommodation providers, pubs, restaurants, wildlife groups etc.

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