

A heritage Trail for Shepton Mallet

Development

Scope

Ian Keys and Alan Stone, Secretary of the Shepton Mallet Historical Society and Chair of the Shepton Mallet Chamber of Trade have worked together to develop a Heritage Trail which will do justice to the history and people of the town and interest and hopefully excite both residents and visitors.

We have looked at other heritage trails which ranged from the very simple - narratives on boards - through boards supplemented by written material, to much more sophisticated versions involving smartphone apps and augmented reality. Whatever the format, each trail involves a physical perambulation around the important sites related to that theme.

After a lot of thought we concluded that, within the likely budget of the town, a version built upon the important themes of the town's heritage, comprising a central narrative board (the 'Start Board') which will introduce the town and each of the theme trails and then, for each trail, a map and narrative to guide and inform visitors as they walk from location to location.

The Town Council has mooted that it wishes to upgrade the present Town Centre Trail into something which embraces the whole of the town and this outline proposal addresses that aim. Also, the Darshill and Bowlish Conservation Society (DBCS) (a registered charity) is nearing the completion of its Heritage Lottery and private donor-funded heritage project, and is committed to leaving a heritage trail around the key sites in the western hamlets of Darshill, Ham and Bowlish. They have expressed a wish to join in with the trail being considered for the rest of the town.

Trail content

The heritage themes we have in mind presently are (together with some early ideas of content):

- **Brewing**
- **Entertainment**
- **Religion**
- **Cloth making**
- **Schools**
- **Prison**
- **Trade & Industry**

- **Creativity** (Arts, sciences and more....)
- **People of note**

These nine themes cover the core of the town’s heritage, we believe, but could be amended or added to in future.

The Start Board

The central summarising narrative board, we feel, should be located in the Market Place and probably on the wall of the library. This board will contain a synopsis of the development of the town (the Synopsis Board) ; a brief summary of each of the trails (the Summary Board) , an estimate of the length, duration and ease of walking of the trail, and the starting QR-code for each; the Town Council logo and an engaging drawing or picture.

To allow the trails to be changed or substituted without substantial cost, we plan that each trail summary be on an individual removable sign. The overall look of the Start Board would be:

Synopsis of development of town	<i>Theme 1 - Brewing</i>	<i>Theme 6</i>
	<i>Theme 2</i>	<i>Theme 7</i>
	<i>Theme 3</i>	<i>Theme 8</i>
	<i>Theme 4</i>	<i>Theme 9</i>
	<i>Theme 5</i>	<i>Spare</i>
Town Council logo		

We estimate that the size of the Synopsis Board (LH above) will be 800mm x 600mm, and each of the Summary Board theme plates (RH above) 300mm x 160mm.

What will the trail follower experience?

After confirming their interest in the town via the Synopsis Board, the follower will look over the various trails on the Summary Board to identify one which they wish to follow. They will then download the specialist application onto their smartphone and then scan the relevant QR-code to see a welcome page including a map of the trail with the various stopping points. The map will orientate them towards the first stopping point, which they will then walk to.

At the first location, either automatically or at the press of a key the relevant audible narrative about the location will play. At the end, the map will reappear to guide them to the next point on the trail. This will be repeated similarly for all points on the trail, depositing the visitor back at the Market Place in due course.

The narrative for each trail location will be written from a historical perspective and will be recorded using local people and accents. There will likely be accompanying music and/or other sounds as well to make the experience more enjoyable. Of course, the leaflet version will only include a reduced narrative.

Visitors not possessing a smartphone will be able to access the trails via a downloadable guide (from the Town Council website?).

Technology

The technology involved is well-used for other trails of various kinds, including historic monuments and country parks and it comes in a form which is substantially user-inputted and updateable. Trails can be added or deleted with ease.

Access into the trail is via a smart-phone application and the logging onto a particular trail by scanning the relevant QR-code on the Summary Board. Each theme map is GPS-driven, and so gives a precise location for the smartphone as the visitor travels the trail.

We have taken an outline estimate from a specialist company named Audio Trails Ltd www.audiotrails.co.uk and an example of a similar trail to the one under discussion here can be found at audiotrails.co.uk/don-valley-way-audio-trail-app

Their audio tour app platform is designed to be both simple to use and intuitive and is compatible with both iOS and Android systems. The platform supports MP3 files and one or more trails, each of which is displayed on Google Maps. The audio narrative can either be triggered automatically via GPS or selected manually from the playlist.

The following features are included too:

- Content Management System - we can add and edit our own content
- One image per audio stop - could be a local personality or an old photograph
- Add copy - i.e. an audio transcript or directions to the next stop

Multilingual support and an inclusive Support and Maintenance package (to address any bugs introduced by Apple or Android) are available at additional cost.

Trail cost

Start Board

For durability and minimal cost of maintenance, laser-etched monochrome stainless steel boards are preferable to either plastic or printed products. We considered the use of cast aluminium boards, which are durable, but the sand casting technique involved would likely mean that the QR-codes would need to be larger to be sure that they will scan properly. We have therefore established costs for laser-etched stainless steel.

Mounting

Mounting the Start Board onto one wall of the Library in the Market Place by volunteers will be at minimal cost (screws and plugs), but will require the permission of the property owner.

The audio trail

Audio Trails Ltd costs are structured with a number of components:

- The app. - £1350 + VAT = £1620
- App. maintenance fee (for 9 trails; starts after 1 year) - £400 + VAT per annum = £480

The app Fee package begins after 1 year and it is possible to pay for the next 4 years as a one-off payment. In accounting terms, these this fees is annual or revenue expenditure, but the Council may find it easier to manage the one-off payment, thus covering costs for an additional 4 years (first year no charge).

Thus, to cover a 4 year period the annual app. fee becomes:

- App Fee - £1920

Content and contingency

To these, we will need to add the costs involved in creating the content (researching, writing, recording and music etc), say £1000 and a 10% contingency of set-up costs.

Overall

Option 1, set-up plus annual fees

- Start Board - £1200 inc VAT
- Mounting - permission-given estimate £50
- The audio trail - app cost £1620 inc VAT
- Content - estimate £1000
- Contingency 10% - £390

Grand total estimate £4,260 plus annual fee of £480

Option 2, set-up plus rolled-up annual fees

- Start Board - £1200 inc VAT
- Mounting - permission-given estimate £50
- The audio trail - including years 2-5 app. maintenance fee £3540 inc VAT
- Content - estimate £1000
- Contingency 10% of set-up cost only - £390

Grand total estimate £6,180 for 5 years in all

As mentioned above, DBCS is committed to installing a heritage trail in the western suburbs of Shepton Mallet and has grant funding to cover its costs. On the basis that their and their sponsor's branding is included in the overall town trail and that their content is included in the Cloth-making and other relevant trails, they would be prepared to make a proportionate contribution towards the overall cost of the town-wide trail.

However, given that the town trail is different in scope from the original proposal agreed by the Heritage Lottery, permission will be needed for the change.

Trail delivery

It is the content of the trails and Start Board which will take time to develop and we estimate around 3 months.

From there, the production of the trail files, including identifying suitable local people to read the content, editing and adding background sounds, we estimate will take a further 3 months. Moreover, involving local people to read content will give an opportunity to engage more widely in the community.

For uploading and the ironing out of glitches, we should allow a further month, making 7 months in all.

Once work has been completed, then installation of the Start Board and initialisation of the app. can take place followed by, perhaps, a launch event.