

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Tourism, Events and Markets Action Plan for Ledbury

30TH APRIL 2025

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Introduction

The objective of this commission is to produce a local tourism, events and markets action plan for Ledbury with the aim of maximising the tourism opportunities for the town.

The project has been funded by Herefordshire Council, thanks to Government UK Shared Prosperity Funding, and overseen by a steering group comprising representatives from Ledbury Town Council, Herefordshire Council, Ledbury Places, Herefordshire County BID (Business Improvement District), Ledbury Traders & Business Association, Ledbury Poetry and Eastnor Castle.

Rose Regeneration and eighteen⁷³ proposed a joint team to deliver this tender, working with markets specialist BAS Consultancy. The commission focused on reviewing the markets offering, improving the visitor welcome and information provision, increasing joint working between the various heritage buildings and local attractions, and ensuring that this is done in conjunction with Herefordshire County BID and businesses, providers, traders association, to contribute to the wider county tourism offer and ensure that local businesses are benefiting from Visit Herefordshire's profile.

A number of existing reports (see Appendix 1) were made available to us and they served as valuable context for our own research.

Local organisations/ businesses have made valuable contributions through an online survey, one-to-one interviews and attendance at two online focus groups and an in-person workshop.

Methodology

An inception meeting was held on 19 December 2024 with the project steering group. It was an opportunity to discuss recent and upcoming projects, their ambition for the town and the market, and the delivery of the project. The following methodology was agreed:

- A **survey** of traders, customers and visitors to gather data on local sentiment;
- In-depth **interviews** with key stakeholders;
- **A festivals, events and markets focus group** to understand in more detail how the market operates as part of Ledbury's wider economy, along with any challenges and solutions, and the impact of festivals and events on trade in town (11 February);
- **A retail and hospitality focus group** to understand current activity, pressures & activity (13 February);
- A public, interactive **workshop** to think creatively about the vision for Ledbury and to discuss ideas for the principal themes of this commission (4 March).

Progress meetings have been held with the Steering Group to update on the status of the project, act as an opportunity to ask questions and provide guidance.

Executive summary

Each section within this report responds to a specific requirement of the tender, detailing the rationale and recommendations. This Executive Summary outlines key recommendations. We have also included an 'at a glance' summary at the end of this document of Short Term Actions.

Partnership Working & Management/ Delivery Structures

- A joined-up and collaborative approach to growing Ledbury's markets and visitor offer is necessary. Both the town council's sub-committees, retailer-led traders' association and existing attractions and provider are committed to the same outcome, a successful economy.
- Extend membership of the TEMAP (Tourism, Events and Markets Project) to bring in traders, Ledbury Places, Ledbury Poetry, Eastnor Castle and Herefordshire County BID plus other key stakeholders (e.g. Hellens Manor, The Feathers) to harness the positivity demonstrated throughout this consultation to move forward the town's tourism offer in a coordinated manner. To meet quarterly.
- Create an independent Festivals & Events Committee to bring together all stakeholders interested in progressing this specific agenda. Representative to sit on TEMAP to ensure clear lines of communication.
- Meet regularly with the other town clerks and the LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership) to share ways of working, intelligence etc and ensure Ledbury is aware of all promotional and funding opportunities.
- Town Council to facilitate/ reinforce dialogue between the LVEP and tourism businesses e.g. share opportunities to get involved in County BID activities.

Staff Resourcing & Training

- Recruit a Tourism & Markets Manager to run the Tourist Information Service and the Market as well as oversee bookings for St Katherine's Square. This individual would also attend the TEMAP meetings and sit on the Festivals & Events Committee.
- Work with an initial team of volunteers which is ready to help run a new TIC, having previously worked in the original one on The Homend.
- Make use of destination training, available via the Herefordshire County BID.

Developing the scale & scope of tourism in Ledbury

- Harness the positivity & enthusiasm created by this consultation
- Work smart by thinking strategically and working together
- Embrace and enhance the heritage offer
- Leverage the potential of the 'Box of Delights' theme
- Play to Visit Herefordshire's brand pillars
- Proactively promote Ledbury at home and away
- Engage with Herefordshire County BID on initiatives to boost strategic growth
- Create and promote bookable experiences

Revitalising & better promoting the market

- Retain and grow both Tuesday and Saturday Charter Markets, promoting Ledbury as an authentic Market Town.
- Develop the market according to a strategic vision with a strong focus on curating the offer to ensure local, seasonal high quality stalls
- Position the Market House undercroft as a place to meet and eat
- Improve the market's look and feel e.g. no vans
- Expand at the current location first but plan for expansion by identifying secondary location
- Bring in new skills or explore a commercial contract to operate the market

Improving local Visitor information Provision

- Operate the TIC from Master's House (subject to budget), with potential to support this with small mini info points which signpost to the main TIC for more detailed advice.
- See Staff Resourcing above ref team and training.
- Distribute visitor leaflet more widely to target visitors (actual & potential) and work with retailers on a visitor information insert.
- Explore opportunities to expand services offered e.g. e-bike rental, guided tours

Exploring opportunities for an improved range of festivals & events

- Establish Festivals & Events Committee to coordinate calendar and fundraising efforts.
- Develop closer partnerships with key events, particularly Ledbury Poetry Festival to maximise benefit for the town.
- Agree which festival concepts to progress, considering the options put forward: Herefordshire Wine & Cheese Festival, Herefordshire Design Fair and Land Rover event.
- Develop a promotional relationship with Eastnor Castle e.g. info board & leaflet display

Developing an event plan for St Katherine's Square

- Proactively manage use of the Square via the Tourism & Markets Manager.
- Use it as a secondary event space i.e. a key element of the town's 'historic heart of activation' and also promote it for community use and themed activities.
- Seek investment to enable electric connectivity and greenery to enhance its appeal.

Section 1 - Tourism Potential

Requirement: Carry out a review of the current scale and potential of the tourism sector in Ledbury to identify opportunities for growth and develop an action plan setting out how tourism footfall and visitor spend in Ledbury could be maximised over the next five years.

1.0 Destination Ledbury

Ledbury's attractiveness as a visitor destination centres on its independent high street, historic charm and rural situation, surrounded by countryside, including the Malvern Hills. It is also home to three small heritage attractions and the well-regarded Ledbury Poetry Festival. Within close proximity lie Eastnor Castle, Hellens Manor, Westons Cider and the Three Counties Showground, with its regular programme of events. Sitting to the east of the county, its 'three counties' location benefits from easy access to the motorway as well as train services to Birmingham, Oxford and London.

There is accommodation within the town and the surrounds, including at the iconic Feathers Hotel, The Seven Stars, The Talbot and The Verzon House Hotel as well as self-catering properties (e.g. White House Cottages in Aylton), camping and glamping sites (e.g. Woodside Lodges) and Airbnb options. In the town itself, accommodation is often at capacity. Such is the demand that the Feathers is converting its leisure and corporate space to bedrooms.

Other developments on the horizon include a potential art gallery at Hellens Manor which would display a special collection of paintings and the John Masefield project, which has received £222,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and will lead into the celebrations around the 150th anniversary of his birth in 2028. It is also noted that 2026 will be the 30th anniversary of Ledbury Poetry Festival.

Furthermore, at this stage, the devolution agenda is looking at Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire counties all working more closely together. Given Ledbury's advantageous location to all three, devolution may open up opportunities to further raise the profile of the town and attract new (and returning) visitors.

1.1 The County-wide Tourism Context

In 2023, tourism contributed £736 million to Herefordshire's economy which, taking into account inflation, means it has returned almost exactly to the 2019 pre-Covid level.

Herefordshire as a whole welcomes 5 million day visitors annually and 900k overnight visitors. Day visitors spend on average £47 whilst those staying over spend an average of £266.

The most popular months are:

July 807,000 visitors

August 756,000 visitors

June 609,000 visitors

Followed by:

April 577,000 visitors

May 534,000 visitors

Sept 531,000 visitors

The sector generates 8,014 full-time equivalent jobs which comprises 16% of all employment in Herefordshire. This is primarily in the food and drink sector with 44.2% jobs, followed by accommodation at 24.3% and shopping 18.7%.

(Source: STEAM 2023)

1.2 The Local Tourism Context

Tourism promotion

Tourism is definitely on the Town Council’s agenda which has led to the recent commissioning of a visitor leaflet, as well as this tender. Nevertheless, prior to these projects, marketing has not been proactive. For instance a town guide which is out of date and out of stock, a very limited visitor information service and no dedicated website for the town (although there is a useful presence on the Visit Herefordshire site). There is also a page on the Council website promoting the Charter Market (to be updated and improved shortly) and a Facebook page for the same with 1,000 followers.

In addition to the new leaflet, there is further work underway to install new Information Boards in town.

Place Informatics data

Place Informatics is contracted by Herefordshire County BID to supply visitors statistics for the city and market towns, based on mobile phone data.

The data for Ledbury suggests that the number of visitors to the town is slightly increasing, although overall footfall is slightly down on last year’s figures. This drop was not identified as a theme/concern in our consultation work and we don’t believe it to be of significance. However, we would recommend monitoring the quarterly data against previous years to ensure there is no evidence of a negative trend.

	2023	2024
Total footfall Q 1,2,3	1,759,856	1,740,753
Average dwell time (mins)	38	37
Average of visitors	78,099	78,758

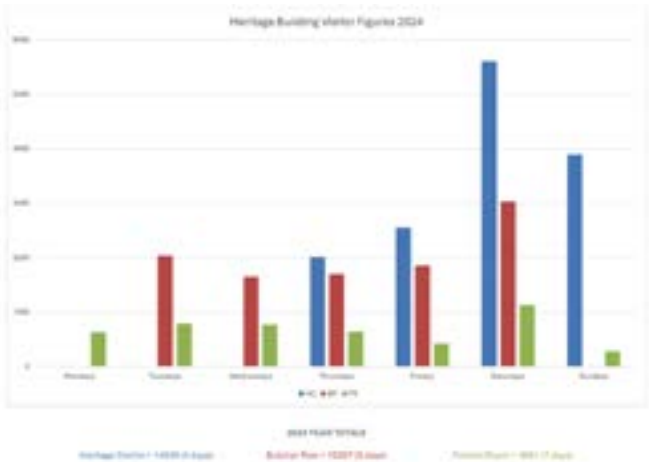
Regarding the origin of Ledbury’s visitors, 79.2% come from the West Midlands and 16% from the South West, with the remainder coming from outside these regions, principally Wales and the South East. This was reinforced by the discussions held during the consultation.

Data from local attractions

Figures from the Heritage Centre indicate that visitor numbers have not returned to pre-Covid level which indicates there is work to be done:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Heritage Centre Visitors	24,997	918	8,780	13,320	14,176	15,028

Across 2024, the three principal heritage attractions (Heritage Centre, Butchers Row and The Painted Room) attracted some 28,967 visitors (it would be useful to continue to track these figures year on year). The graph to the right shows visitor numbers for each in the period March to October 2024 and show greater numbers visiting the Heritage Centre despite being open the fewest days), and the reverse for the Painted Room.



1.3 Tourism Landscape

Visit Herefordshire marketing & PR

On a county level, the consumer-facing destination brand is Visit Herefordshire which was originally funded by covid recovery monies in 2020 but is now funded by those paying a levy to Herefordshire County BID.

The Visit Herefordshire website is the focal point for all marketing and PR activities. In 2024 the site attracted 355,648 users, with an average session duration of 2 minutes 48 seconds, as well as over 15 million impressions in Google.

All tourism businesses can take advantage of a free directory listing, whilst levy paying businesses are featured as 'golden apples', benefiting from a more comprehensive directory listing and preferential placement in search results. These listings are searchable by category and/or location.

In addition, Ledbury has a dedicated town page which has recently been revamped and now includes a shopping directory function as well as highlighted itineraries/articles featuring Ledbury (linking through to trip ideas section). Over the past 12 months, with minimal promotion, the page has received 20,339 views from 15,784 unique users. Overall, there have been 24,000 views of any Ledbury-related content.

There is also a What's On function, which offers free listings of suitable events and a monthly e-newsletter which highlights key content and goes out to 7,400 subscribers.

Visit Herefordshire runs regular marketing, social and PR campaigns. Press coverage has ranged from The Guardian to Conde Nast Traveller and Ledbury is often showcased as a result of the media activity undertaken. Opportunities to get involved are promoted to all via the Herefordshire County BID e-newsletter.

Visit Herefordshire is also building partnerships with both Lakefest and the Three Counties Showground and will be taking a stall at each in 2024, opening up opportunities to distribute literature and promote Ledbury to attendees.

Engaging positively with Visit Herefordshire's marketing and PR activity is essential to maximise Ledbury's profile.

Visit Herefordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership

The Visit Herefordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) was established in 2024. Its role is to manage the sustainable growth of the county's tourism sector and it is steered by Herefordshire County BID, Hereford BID and Herefordshire Council.

It identifies that close collaboration with town councils, businesses and charitable organisations will be crucial to its success. The Visit Herefordshire LVEP will be launching its ten-year Destination Management Plan (DMP) in late April 2025.

Ten-year targets

The DMP for Herefordshire is set to propose growth targets for the county's tourism economy. Herefordshire is an emerging destination so, after the foundation period is completed, the targets are ambitious. However, given the relatively low starting point, these targets are viewed as achievable. More established destinations have lower growth potential and are targeting around 5 - 6% growth over the same time period. These targets set the wider scene for Ledbury's potential to grow its visitor economy.

Targets	Economic Impact	Visitor Days	Visitors - overnight stays	FTE Jobs
Current (2023)	£735m	8m	890,000	8,014
Phase: Foundations	+3% p.a	+3% p.a	+3% p.a	Static
Phase: Realisation	+5% p.a	+5% p.a	+5% p.a	+3% p.a

Phase: Capitalisation	+10% p.a	+10% p.a	+10% p.a	+5% p.a
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1.4 Key areas for growth

There are a number of areas where Ledbury can look to boost its tourism offer:

- **Harness the positivity & enthusiasm created by this consultation**

The consultation undertaken as part of this commission has been hugely valuable as it has helped spark a real energy round Ledbury's tourism potential. This was demonstrated, in particular, by the high attendance at the in-person workshop. This local enthusiasm can be maintained and grown by opening up positive, open communications between the Town Council, businesses and the community organisations involved in the visitor economy.

In the first instance, we recommend that this report (or summary) is shared with consultees and that a parish meeting is called to discuss the recommendations - our team is very happy to present the findings in person.

- **Work smart by thinking strategically and working together**

There are limited budgets and staff resources to support the development and promotion of the local visitor economy. It is therefore vital that activity is driven by strategic thinking, with a strong focus on the activations highlighted in this report (such as an enhanced market, new event concepts) and coordinated effort e.g. joint marketing. For everyone to play their part, the lines of communication that have been opened by this exercise now need to stay open.

We recommend that a structure is established to manage this partnership, for example, extending membership of the TEMAP. Partners would include the Traders & Business Association, Ledbury Places, Ledbury Poetry, Hellens Manor, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire County BID etc.

Also, we recommend a Festivals and Events Committee is established to progress the new concepts which have been developed through this consultation as well as supporting existing events to become more successful. This could be based on the Town Council festivals group which has been paused recently.

- **Embrace and enhance the heritage offer**

The outstanding medieval architecture of Ledbury is central to its identity and USP as a visitor destination. To strengthen this offer, key heritage attractions would benefit from aligning their opening hours. For example, if they all opened on a Tuesday then the collective offer could be promoted as a weekly 'Tudor Tuesday'. Visitors would have a richer and more compelling experience as they could visit all of the attractions on the same day and it would support the Tuesday market too. There would be scope to create further reasons to visit, working with Ledbury Places on initiatives such as guided walks run by heritage ambassadors, additional events to support the town's offer for Heritage Open Days, and making broader links with the area's agricultural history, such as heritage orchard tours. These services would be great for broadening tourism messaging and attracting higher visitor numbers.

- **Leverage the potential of the 'Box of Delights' theme**

Masefield's 'Box of Delights' couldn't be more perfect for Ledbury. It is an evocative way to describe the town's many and various desirable elements, from its independent shops and woodland walks to the Poetry Festival. It is also embedded in the town's literary heritage so feels very authentic. It offers a rich seam of marketing potential and our recommendation is to think about how it can be used in an interesting and engaging way. For example, the proposed Tourist Information Centre could be designed around this theme and it lends itself beautifully to promoting both the late night Christmas shopping event and the new Winter Weekend being launched by Ledbury Poetry. There are clear alignments with the Masefield Matters project to which it is hoped will have a visitor element as well as a longer legacy.

We love 'Box of Delights' as a potential theme to reinforce positioning of Ledbury as a 'poetry town', looking to Hay's success as the 'town of books' as inspiration.

- **Play to Visit Herefordshire's brand pillars**

The county's DMP will highlight three core brand pillars focused around borderland history, artisanal food and unspoilt landscapes, which all align with Ledbury's offer. There will be numerous marketing & PR opportunities at a Visit Herefordshire level, which Ledbury can seize. Working closely with the Visit Herefordshire team will enable the town to shout louder and reach more potential visitors. For example, initial contact has been made with Amy Howard focused on the development of a poetry-themed itinerary. There will be numerous other ways for the town to work with VH on content and campaigns, and make the most of the existing marketing channels including website, social media, PR, e-newsletters etc.

In addition, it is noted that the proposed Wine Festival (see Section 4) would be particularly relevant to the artisan food and drink theme. Given Ledbury's 'three counties' location, the ambition could be set to develop this into a significant event.

Meanwhile, Ledbury's proximity to the Malvern Hills and other walking routes (e.g. GeoPark Way, Herefordshire Trail, Marcle Ridge) also chimes with the county's positioning as an undiscovered playground for outdoor adventures, suggesting opportunities to promote Ledbury as a destination for walking breaks, whether individuals or organised groups.

- **Proactively promote Ledbury at home and away**

A new visitor leaflet has been commissioned by the Town Council and is currently in production. The next steps will be to look at distribution. It will, of course, need to be made available in the town and surrounds at shops, eateries, attractions and accommodation providers. It is also recommended that consideration is given to the many housing developments which will bring many new residents to the area, many of whom will be keen to get to know Ledbury - there may be opportunities to engage with developers to display literature in the showroom offices and to distribute to new residents. In addition, leaflets should be distributed further afield, targeting areas with a propensity to both visit and spend, with monitoring available via Place Informatics.

- **Follow the newly established look and feel for all visitor materials**

The design of the new visitor leaflet and accompanying information boards, which are being installed at three sites around town, created the opportunity to establish a consistent look and feel for visitor materials. The colour palette features the Town Council's teal, with supporting shades designed to work across the family of visitor marketing materials, including the market gazebos. This colour palette needs to be used consistently in the future. Subject to demand from the TEMAP, there would be potential to agree a strapline and a logo for Ledbury.

- **Engage with Herefordshire County BID on initiatives to boost strategic growth**

The new DMP will be working towards overcoming county-wide challenges to the tourism economy. A critical challenge for Ledbury and Herefordshire as a whole is the relative lack of rooms for visitors. The Feathers is addressing this to some degree by converting some underused spaces into bedrooms. The Herefordshire BID will be initiating activity to encourage more businesses (e.g. cider farms) to look at creative ways of offering accommodation. It is recommended that the Town Council works closely with the BID to disseminate information and opportunities widely. Herefordshire Council is also commissioning a hotel study for the study to identify gaps in provision and areas for investment. For example, a small chain hotel on the bypass could make a huge impact and enable Ledbury to service higher visitor numbers, including the visiting family and friends market which is likely to increase in line with the new housing developments locally.

- **Create and promote bookable experiences**

Bookable experiences are increasingly popular and it is worth exploring ideas and opportunities. In the note around heritage above, there was mention of guided tours. These could be launched for Heritage Open Days and then trialled on a monthly basis (ticketed). We recognise this is outside the Council's remit but might be considered by Ledbury Places perhaps.

Promotion is key as it needs to reach an audience far beyond the local area, for example, by selling via third-party sites such as Get Your Guide, Viator, Airbnb Experiences etc, running targeted Meta ad campaigns and ensuring they are listed on VisitHerefordshire.co.uk.

Herefordshire County BID will be offering training on the development and promotion of experiences, including pricing, which it would be advisable to attend and disseminate to local partners.

1.5 Quick wins

- Establish wider TEMAP
- Relaunch the Festivals & Events Committee
- Initiate and launch 'Tudor Tuesdays'
- Engage with Visit Herefordshire, including shopping directory
- Distribute Ledbury leaflet in key places, locally and further afield
- Develop stronger relationships with key nearby attractions including Eastnor Castle, Three Counties Showground and Malvern Hills National Landscape

1.6 Longer-term developments for growth

- Work with Visit Herefordshire LVEP to encourage more beds and attract a new hotel to the Ledbury area
- Develop and promote more bookable experiences (outside Council remit, but should be factored in to plans)
- Work with the Visit Herefordshire LVEP to maximise all future opportunities
- Deliver on the activations focused on the market and new events
- Establish a robust and proactive TIC presence
- Ensuring the wider TEMAP and Festivals & Events Committee are recognised as key partners and are delivering real impact

Section 2 - Charter Market

Requirement: Carry out a review of the current Market provision in Ledbury, which includes the twice weekly, Charter Market, to identify how this could be revitalised and better promoted to increase footfall and spend within the town.

2.0 Introduction

This section reviews the Ledbury Charter Market operation and makes recommendations for its improvement over the medium to long term.

2.1 UK Context

Markets have been a vital part of town and city life for millennia, and in the UK are a common sight in our centres. However, the number of people employed as market traders in the UK has been falling in recent years – from a high of 23,000 in 2014, to just 16,000 in 2017, the most recent year we have published data. The pandemic further eroded the sector as many local authorities cancelled market licences, forcing market traders to seek alternative employment, and recovery has been slow.

The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) February 2024 newsletter quoted the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Head of Urban Policy, who said at the NABMA conference: *"We believe markets, along with the rest of the high street, must evolve to meet the current and future needs of consumers and their wider communities"*.

This theme of evolution is widely supported, but evolution presents a challenge at a time of depleted council resources, changing consumer habits and a sector that remains in recovery from the pandemic.

More positively, in some cases, funds released to support town centres during the pandemic were invested in improving market infrastructure. Many UK markets, including Stroud, Frome and Abergavenny have engaged in a process of strategic reinvention and represent case studies that other markets can learn from.

The opportunity presented by well-functioning and popular markets is now more clearly understood because of these success stories. Markets are:

- An opportunity for **place activation**
- A key part of place **brand identity** and heritage
- A catalyst for **economic development** and regeneration
- An opportunity for low cost, low risk **enterprise**

2.2 Current situation: Ledbury Market

Operational and regulatory context

Ledbury Market is operated via its Charter powers, conferred by Elizabeth I in 1585 (superseding an earlier Charter from King Stephen in 1138), and Part III of the Food Act 1984. These powers are conferred on the Town Council, which has prescribed two market days, Tuesday and Saturday from 08:00 to 14:00. The market is operated under and adjacent to the Market House, which dates from 1617, on Ledbury High Street.

A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) granted by Herefordshire County Council suspends eight parking bays on the High Street for the operation of the market on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The TRO is in effect until 5pm, leaving parking spaces suspended after the market has vacated.

There are no staff dedicated solely to the operation and growth of the market. Set up is undertaken by the Town Council's Maintenance Operative and a Community Engagement Manager is responsible for marketing and trader recruitment as part of her role.

The market is larger in the summer months than it is in the winter. The Tuesday market in winter time operates with just one or two traders, and Saturday can host between six and eight stalls.

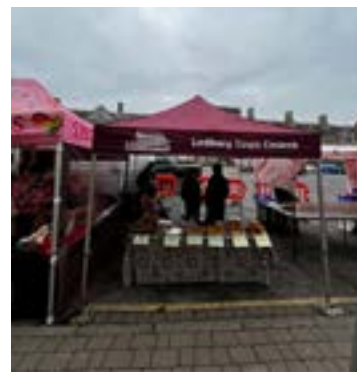
There is almost no information available online about the Ledbury Charter Market, including opening hours. A Google search of 'Ledbury Charter Market' returns links to the Town Council markets webpage, which contains no information, plus additional links in relation to the Friday Ledbury Country Market and the Market House.

Members of the public unfamiliar with Ledbury would not currently be able to find useful information online to inform them before their visit.

Strategic work to date

The strategic direction and growth of the market is overseen by a sub-committee of the Town Council, The Tourism, Events and Markets Project Board (TEMAP). A strategy paper was produced in 2024 following a discovery and research exercise that set out the Board's thoughts on how the market should evolve. This led to the inclusion of market strategy in the brief for Eighteen73 and Rose Regeneration.

The development of the new St Katherine's Square has also led to some debate about using it for market activity, either as the principle or as a secondary location for the Charter Market. The Town Council looked to understand local sentiment on this issue through the consultation that led to this report.



Event markets

Other regular markets take place in and around Ledbury, some of them associated with events. They include:

- **Hellens Produce Market:** a local food, produce and crafts market that takes place on the first Saturday of every month at Hellens Manor, Much Marcle. The market hosts around 15-20 stalls and a tea room.
- **Ledbury Country Markets:** a long-standing market that takes place every Friday morning in Burgage Hall, specialising in home-cooked & prepared food, plants and crafts.
- **Ledbury Celebration:** a partnership between Town Council, Ledbury Poetry and Ledbury Food Groups, taking place in St Katherine's Car Park & Square, with local producers, street food, al fresco poetry & music performances, sustainability group stalls, kids kitchen. Attendance at 1400+.
- **Christmas Light Switch on event:** takes place on the High Street, which is temporarily closed to traffic, on the last Sunday in November. Up to forty stalls.

In addition, some of Ledbury's events drive additional footfall and traders at the regular Charter Market, including World Book Day.

A Saturday farmers market has been announced for Ledbury in April 2025, held at The Barn and St Katherine's Square^[1]. Organisers have previously run markets at The Barn including a popular Thursday evening market in 2019. The new market is being run to support local farmers.



Hellens Produce Market



Ledbury Country Markets

2.3 Analysis

This section summarises key insights gathered from surveys and interviews about Ledbury Market. The analysis reveals a consensus that the market has potential for growth and revitalisation, but faces several challenges including a lack of management, inconsistent look, uncurated commodity offer and insufficient marketing.

1 <https://www.ledburyreporter.co.uk/news/24965063.new-farmers-market-coming-barn-ledbury/>

Challenges

The matrix summarises the challenges in growing Ledbury Charter Market.

Strategic	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assimilation of markets into broader town goals including tourism• Lack of coordination between market opening hours and heritage coach tours• New traders not being recruited• Lack of clear 'identity' / audience for the market• Limited market strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town centres are changing. Footfall is reducing over time• Retail street markets are struggling• Saturday market unviable after 1-2pm• Budget to operate market is too small to effect growth• Market not operated commercially• Retailers fear competition from market• Lack of 'critical mass' of market traders
Contractual / licensing	Operational
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trader policies not enforced• Low pitch rental income reducing opportunity for management and growth• Limited commercial operators locally to take control of market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No marketing in place• Traders don't feel listened to• Parking, unloading and storage• Lack of physical space for growth• Market House undercroft is windy & dark• Unwelcoming environment for shoppers• Look and feel of market is sub-optimal

Positives and opportunities

There are positive aspects to the market and its wider context that can be used to inform the strategy:

- **The town as a backdrop:** Ledbury is a beautiful, ancient town with many reasons to visit. The tudor buildings act as a picturesque setting for a traditional produce market.
- **Successful trading conditions:** Most of the businesses that currently trade on the market are doing so successfully, supporting the idea that there is demand in Ledbury.
- **Additional space to expand:** There is additional, if limited space for the market to grow around the Market House, including under and inside the Market House itself.
- **Strong, committed volunteer community:** With many active community groups in Ledbury, there is some opportunity to encourage community stallholdings.
- **Successful overall economy:** Ledbury benefits from a strong local economy, low retail vacancy and a catchment with disposable income. The Charter Market can complement town centre retail by bolstering the existing offer and bringing something new.
- **Busy events calendar:** The many events and attractions in the town can provide further opportunity to accentuate Ledbury's brand as a market town.
- **Barriers to entry are low:** The Town Council is not overly prescriptive about the traders it allows to sell on the market and registration is not bureaucratic compared to others.

Further feedback

The interviews, workshops and the survey conducted also contributed the following insights:

General Impressions and Purpose

- Desire for a wider range of goods, including clothing, hot food, antiques, and household items. However, the tendency is towards artisanal / quality rather than value.
- The market should cater to locals, tourists, and regional visitors alike.
- Perceived as untidy, lacking consistent stalls, and suffering from low footfall as a result.

Operational Issues

- A significant issue is the absence of a dedicated market manager to direct market set-up, manage trader/customer feedback, source & book new traders and promote market days.
- The Town Council has limited experience growing a profitable enterprise and the market should be run as a business, even if along not-for-profit principles.
- Attrition is high in the early weeks for new traders. Disincentives for traders include parking fees and overzealous ticketing. New traders should be given a fee-free period to encourage them to stay long enough to build a customer base.
- Inconsistent trader presence: The market lacks consistency in traders, with only a few regular vendors. Tuesday markets are particularly quiet. Winter is quieter than summer.

Location and Layout

- The market's current location is generally considered suitable, but the space under the Market House is seen as windy and unappealing, while the upper floor is inaccessible.
- There is no simple answer to the question of where the market would expand physically. However, the existing space given over to the market is significantly underutilised and expansion should occur in the existing footprint first.
- There is potential for further expansion into St. Katherine's Square, but this expansion would need to include St Katherine's Walk - the alley into the square owned by Hereford Cathedral - to provide line of sight to existing market. Further indoor space in the immediate vicinity is available in St Katherine's Hall.
- There is little appetite for a full relocation of the market into St Katherine's Square.
- Serious concerns exist from retailers about expansion into High Street parking bays.

Competition and Collaboration

- Some High Street businesses worry about direct competition from the market, especially regarding speciality goods like cheese and meat. Others would encourage market traders that sell goods similar to them, to give consumers additional choice and attract footfall.
- There is interest in collaboration with local initiatives like "Totally Locally" and potential for themed markets (e.g. French and German farmers markets, antiques).
- There is a tension between the need to carefully curate the market offer so that it complements rather than detracts from the town centre retail offer, and the availability of traders willing to take on stalls.

2.4 Recommendations

Recommendations focus on improving market management, diversifying the range of goods sold, enhancing the market's ambiance, and addressing parking issues. Collaboration with local businesses and community involvement are stressed as crucial for the market's future success.

In keeping with the recommendations of the wider report on Ledbury's visitor economy, the underpinning principle of the recommendations is to emphasise and promote Ledbury as a market town. This means providing a market offer that meets the demand of a range of audiences and satisfies several purposes.

General recommendations

Retain and grow both Tuesday and Saturday Charter Markets

Both the Tuesday and Saturday markets meet some of the needs of Ledbury's townspeople and visitors and should be retained, with amended operational parameters.

Market growth requires investment in operational and promotional capacity. Limited council funds may require the contracting out of the market operation to a private operator.

Growth is likely to mean increased need for infrastructure, including lighting and seating, changes to the public realm to increase the market footprint and potential amends to parking arrangements.

As markets have grown elsewhere in the country, there has been a need to work with existing retailers to agree the vision for this growth. In the short term, this could mean them accepting that increased competition could temporarily impact sales and reduce parking capacity. However, in the medium to long term, additional footfall inevitably increases sales for both retailers and market traders.

An action plan for growth is included in Section 2.5.

Town Council to promote Ledbury as a Market Town.

Ledbury is proud of its markets. The Town Council webpage should include descriptions of all the markets in and around the town, accompanied with a description of the market so visitors know what to expect. Descriptions can be amended over time as markets grow and change. The market offer of Ledbury includes:

- Tuesday and Saturday Charter Markets
- Ledbury Country Market
- Hellens Produce Market
- Event markets associated with the Poetry Festival, Mop Fair etc
- Privately run markets accessible to the public

It is recommended that the Visit Herefordshire website does not similarly promote Ledbury's market offer to its target audience of regional visitors until it achieves a critical mass of 15 to 20 traders at the Saturday market.

Ledbury's events should be a focus for expanded market days, and in particular the Poetry Festival. It is recommended that the Winter Poetry Festival and the Christmas light switch on event should be complemented with a Christmas market across the entire weekend, including at the Friday night light switch and a Saturday and Sunday Christmas market with road closure.

The Mistletoe Market has been suggested as a unique name for this market, reflecting long-held traditions in the region and likely to attract visitors from outside the area to buy mistletoe – which grows abundantly in the area – and other local food and crafts. This event could emphasise the town's Tudor history and connection to the 'Box of Delights', including performance, walking tours, interactive tudor characters and poetry. Could this happen this year? It would be great if it could.

Develop the market according to a strategic vision

Incorporate the following strategic themes on the Town Council markets webpage. These act as guidance for the Town Council and prospective traders as to the purpose of the market.

- **Tourism:** Mutually beneficial partnerships with identified coach operators to bring tourists to Ledbury to enjoy a packaged offer which includes the market, walking tours, access to tudor buildings, alignment with Tudor Tuesdays etc
- **Activation:** Using the market to provide a point of interest and difference in the town centre, not just for purchasing goods but meeting with friends, eating and drinking, enjoying entertainment and attending associated events.
- **Offer:** Curating a market offer that is complementary to Ledbury's existing retail and hospitality offer
- **Marketing positioning:** Delivering on the visitor offer by strengthening the 'historic market town' element.
- **Circularity and sustainability:** Providing an opportunity at the market for local people to donate, swap and repair items.
- **Enterprise:** at the market. Hereford Buttermarket works really well in this way to help kickstart new enterprises.

Investment in the market should be guided by these themes, and new traders should state how they contribute to one or more of the themes to be selected to trade on the market.

Market positioning

Focus on local, seasonal quality

The Saturday market should reflect the visitor and resident profile of Ledbury, accentuating the high-quality offer elsewhere in the centre both to tourists and local residents. The Tuesday market should focus on local demand but still with an eye to quality goods and seasonal produce (see list below).

Curate the offer

The Tuesday and Saturday offers should be curated so as to add to the existing offer in the town. Specific opportunities include:

- Locally produced food items including bakery and patisserie, preserves, dairy, meats
- Locally sourced, seasonal produce, flowers, plants and fruit and veg
- Imported goods not available elsewhere in town including spices, nuts, dried fruits, charcuterie, cultural delicacies
- Food items that reflect the tastes of local non-indigenous communities
- Locally produced or imported wines, beers and spirits
- High quality local craft items
- High quality handmade kitchenware and gardening tools
- Second hand books and/or vinyl
- Small antiques, knick-knacks and memorabilia

Although other retailers in town sell similar items, the market offer should reinforce Ledbury as a destination for good quality produce, to drive its reputation and attract increased footfall and sales. Where possible, the market should add to the range of produce offered in the town without directly competing, but successful local economies with a market offer usually include a significant degree of overlap. By way of a local example, both the cheese stall and the cheese shop in Ledbury are selling well, despite being in close proximity to one another.

Where feedback has suggested that Ledbury Market may be able to provide goods for Ledbury residents on a budget, this is not recommended as the purpose of Ledbury Charter Market, which is largely to reflect the high quality produce of the region. Other markets such as the Country Market do fulfil this role, and Ledbury supermarkets provide low cost goods to residents on a budget.

Market House undercroft as meeting and eating place

The Market House represents the symbolic and physical heart of the town. As such, it should be used as a backdrop for events, entertainment and as the heart of the market itself.

Relatively inexpensive foldable wooden refectory-style tables and benches (to replace the current plastic furniture which does little to reinforce the presentation of the Market House), decorative festoon lighting (conservation consent permitting) and a portable heating solution could transform the space into a welcoming area to relax and eat, encouraging spend and dwell at the market and in the town centre in general. This should be linked with additional hot food traders trading around the Market House, but the seating should be available for customers of cafes nearby also.

Improve the market's look and feel

The market's appearance should reflect Ledbury's brand values of quality, social connection and heritage. The look and feel of the market could be improved in the following ways:

- Reduce the numbers of vans trading at the market – new traders should be encouraged to trade using the Town Council's gazebos (of which there are twelve) for a consistent look. Vans should be unloaded and parked in St Katherine's.
- Introduce seating, lighting and possibly heating into the Market House undercroft
- Replace emergency barriers with planters on wheels that can be locked into place and moved at the closure of the market
- Decorative noticeboard style installation in vicinity to advertise market opening hours
- New infrastructure such as colourful gazebos to be manufactured in 'tudor' style, to emphasise the heritage of the town and provide a focal point for visitor photos. The look and feel of the Tuesday market can emphasise the 'Tudor Tuesdays' initiative, with infrastructure, tudor foodstuffs, dressed up characters etc, and amplified at Christmas.

Location

Expand at current location first

The Market House is the right location for Ledbury's market and there is considerable scope to expand within the current footprint. Opportunities to increase the market's capacity include:

- Suspend Market House bus stop on market days and relocation to temporary bus stop at Hay Wines.
- Create dedicated pitch space via the narrowing of both sides of the High Street carriageway between The Homend and St Katherine's Hall. Narrowing of the southbound side of the High Street carriageway to Blandfords.
- More efficient use of existing market footprint south of the Market House to include up to 6 additional pitches.
- Closure of Church Lane on market days (with vehicular detour via Bank Crescent and Homend Crescent).

Identify secondary areas for expansion

Any additional market provision should ideally be as close to and visible from the Market House, where the Charter Market is located. There are two options in this case.

The first is expansion on the opposite side of the High Street in front of St Katherine's Hall, along St Katherine's Walk and into St Katherine's Square. St Katherine's Walk and St Katherine's Hall is owned by Herefordshire Cathedral and leased to LEAF. Both are available for hire for market uses, but concerns around pedestrian safety in St Katherine's Walk, access into St Katherine's Hall, noise and waste disposal would need to be addressed to the landlord and tenant's satisfaction. Rates to hire St Katherine's Hall are: £25 per hour, £100 for half a day, £200 for a full day. An indicative rate for hire of St Katherine's Walk would be £20 per day per stall.

The second is to expand further into the parking bays on the High Street. This would be more appropriate for an expanding market, but there would be opposition from local retailers in relation to the reduction in town centre parking on market days.

Where markets are operated that complement the existing offer, the Town Council should support and promote them as part of the wider market offer in Ledbury, subject to agreement on pitch fees. The Town Council may determine that a discounted rate for use of St Katherine's Square for a Saturday Market is appropriate since such an operation would support the growth of Ledbury's market offer.

Operating hours

Tuesday market hours are appropriately set for the target market but steps should be taken to review and amend the Traffic Management Order to align with the Charter and return the suspended parking bays back into use (to be discussed with Herefordshire Council). If the Tudor Tuesdays initiative is successfully introduced, market hours and the focus of the Tuesday market may need to be revised to cater for a visitor market as well as a local one.

Saturday market hours of 08:00 - 14:00, while currently appropriate for wintertime levels of trading, should be amended in the Town Council's Terms of Use as the market grows to encourage footfall across the day, from approximately 10am – 4pm. This reflects the change in the market to provide more hot food for consumption in the Market House undercroft, and a refocusing of the offer to appeal to visitors as well as locals on a Saturday.

Use of the Market House first floor

Specialist market events (book fairs, clothing sales, swap meets etc) should take place upstairs at the Market House wherever possible. Although the space is not accessible, this is a common issue with old buildings and it is preferable to use the hall where there is an opportunity to do so. Some respondents to the consultation suggested a lift should be installed, but the capital outlay and annual maintenance cost for an elevator would likely be prohibitive.

Recruitment and incentivisation of new traders

The Tuesday and Saturday markets should be grown with curatorial focus. This requires resource to visit local producers, growers, traders at other markets and retailers, working towards a relaunch in the summer months.

In order to incentivise new traders, they should be provided with the first 4-6 weeks free of pitch fees to establish a customer base. However, the four weeks' fees will need to be repaid if the trader leaves the market within the first 8 weeks of trading.

There should also be a dispensation for traders that require parking – once their van is unloaded, they should park in one of the two local car parks at a reduced charge for a limited period while the market grows. This should be agreed with Herefordshire County Council to prevent ticketing.

Local retailers should be offered pitches at the market.

Bring in new skills or explore commercial contract

The Town Clerk and her team that supports do not have the specialist skills or capacity required to grow a commercial market. If the operation is to be kept in-house, a marketing professional with experience in both markets and tourism should be hired to steward the market into growth. The manager could operate the TIC and oversee the set-up and promotion of the market, recruiting new traders and curating the offer.

Alternatively, a number of commercial operators deliver markets in the area, including LSD Promotions (Worcester), Boffy Arts and Events (Malvern), and Town & Country Markets (Shrewsbury). They should be approached to explore the tendering of a market contract to run Ledbury according to the parameters as set out in this report.

Any commercial deal would be a matter of negotiation. If the commercial operator believes there is sufficient potential in the location, some market operators agree a cost neutral / shared risk deal with localities. In other cases, places are required to subsidise the early days of a commercial market operation, with the burden of promotion falling to both sides. The use of the existing gazebos may represent leverage in negotiation with private operators, but some prefer to use their own. In some cases, e.g. Stroud, local authorities licence private market operators in return for a fee.

Factors that may influence the negotiation could include:

- The success of markets in the past in the same location
- The presence of other markets in the area
- Data on footfall and spend in the immediate area
- How prescriptive the Council's contract is (e.g. in terms of operating hours, commodities sold, reporting etc.)
- How permissive the Council is on initial rent-free periods

Exemplar models

A number of examples of markets, urban and rural, and how they have been re-shaped are included in Appendix 4. Amongst the factors which contribute to successful revitalisation are;

- **Community focus:** Good markets serve as gathering points for residents, fostering social connections and supporting local identity.
- **Local producers:** Emphasis on local, seasonal, and artisanal products appeals to both residents and visitors.
- **Accessibility:** Many are held in central village locations or historic sites, making them easy to reach and welcoming.
- **Atmosphere:** Live music, friendly traders, and picturesque backdrops create a memorable experience.
- **Adaptability:** Some markets operate monthly or seasonally, aligning with rural demand and producer availability.

Develop an inclusive governance model

A joined-up and collaborative approach to growing Ledbury's markets and visitor offer is necessary. Both the town council's sub-committees and the retailer-led traders' association are committed to the same outcome, a successful economy, but should agree a joint strategy to achieve this. In addition, market traders and others with specific skills needed to grow the market should be included in meetings which consider strategic and operational issues related to the market. This is the rationale for the proposed extension of the TEMAP with a dedicated market growth strand within it.

2.5 Action Plan: Markets

Task	Aim to Complete
Establish market growth group within the TEMAP to include traders and supportive retailers	0-6 months
Restructure market support staff to include 'on call' set-up operative and additional promotion and trader recruitment duties for town council staff member i.e. the proposed role of Tourism & Markets Manager	0-2 months
Trader recruitment for summer season	0-3 months
Market warming discussions with potential operators	0-3 months
Enforcement of 'no vans' rule	0-6 months
Discussions with Herefordshire Council re TRO variations	0-3 months
Develop and implement investment plan for market dressing	0-6 months
Expanded market days for Winter Poetry Festival and Christmas Lights (potential name, Mistle-toe Market). Aim to start this year.	0-6 months
Recruit guest / event markets for autumn	5-6 months
If decide not to resource internally, then manage the procurement of an external market operator to grow the market on secondary St Katherine's site	6+ months

Section 3 - Visitor Information Service

Requirement: Carry out a review of options to improve the local Visitor Information Service to meet visitor needs, to include considering an outline business case for relocation and operation of a Visitor Information Centre to the Masters House, Ledbury.

3.0 Introduction

The Visitor Information Service in Ledbury has traditionally been a source of local pride. Budgetary constraints have led to the service being somewhat limited over recent years, but there is still an ambition to re-energise the visitor information offer.

There is a general sense that having a place to welcome visitors and to excite them about what is on offer in the area would be beneficial to a wide range of local businesses and organisations.

This report considers current trends in visitor information services and regional examples, followed by a review of Ledbury's current service and options for future operations, including relocation to the Masters House.

3.1 Recent History of Ledbury's Visitor Information Service

Ledbury's Visitor Information Service has relocated several times in recent years, with the level of service diminishing on each occasion.

The TIC once benefited from a prime position in the centre of town when it was run from rental premises (3 The Homend, now Specsavers), with a team of paid staff.

When the lease expired in spring 2008, it was agreed that the service should relocate to the Master's House, making anticipated revenue savings of £21,000pa (against a total subsidy of £85,000).

Herefordshire Council pushed forward the idea for this move citing cost savings due to no rent being payable ([link to Hereford Times article](#)), as well as the decline in TIC visitors, from 84,664 in 2003 to 78,192 in 2006, as information became more readily available online. It was also noted that local residents comprised 50% of the visitors.

In 2010, Herefordshire Council made the decision to close the TIC at the end of the year, as part of a county-wide Tourism Review. Local business Ice Bytes stepped in to offer an alternative which opened in March 2011. The cafe set aside a large space for visitor leaflet display and also sold National Express tickets.

When Ice Bytes cafe suddenly closed in 2021, the decision was taken to move the tourist literature to the town council reception.

Significant local support has been demonstrated for a TIC in the past, evidenced through numerous petitions to protect the service.

3.2 UK Context & Trends

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a UK-wide trend for the closure of Tourist Information Centres (TICs). Examples abound. From Morecambe to Totnes, Caerphilly to Norwich, many destinations have closed their TIC in the past two years, and in April 2024, Visit Scotland announced plans to axe its remaining twenty-five tourist information 'iCentres' over the next two years.

From a local authority perspective, tourism is not a statutory duty and, as per the Ledbury experience, there is a rationale for closures based on rising costs and reduced need due to online visitor information. This latter point particularly relates to accommodation booking which is now usually managed in advance, via the internet.

It is interesting to note that in some destinations innovative community-led initiatives are starting to fill the void. These services provide the warm welcome and respond to 'here and now' information requirements.

Looking again north of the border, Scoto (Scottish Community Tourism) and its network are leading this trend. Community social enterprise Bùth Bharraigh Ltd is providing tourist information services on the island of Burra, alongside laundry, bike hire, free Wi-fi, hot drinks and printing services.

Similarly, the Loch Ness Hub launched in 2021 with a focus on providing ‘a proper local welcome and savvy local advice’ (Link to article in The Telegraph). Its services also include e-bike hire, baggage and shuttle transfers for the Great Glen Way and a gift shop selling locally-sourced products.

This move towards community-led initiatives could be of interest and inspiration to Ledbury as it looks at options for improving its visitor information service.

3.3 Regional Models of Visitor Information Provision

Closer to home, there are various models for visitor information provision, with Leominster TIC offering the most fully-rounded service as below. This is our preferred and recommended model.

Leominster	Fully-functioning TIC with Funded Post
Managed by	Leominster Town Council
Location	On Corn Square within the Town Council building in the heart of the town. Set out over the ground floor and with ramped access.
Opening Hours	Monday to Saturday, 9.30am to 4pm.
Staffing	One paid role of Information Manager, with responsibility for managing a team of volunteers.
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers visitor advice and free leaflets • Sells local souvenirs and gifts, including preserves and alcohol, local interest books, maps and guides. • Acts as a box office for local music events, theatre shows, guided walks and National Express tickets, • Features an art gallery displaying work from local artists. • Walkers Are Welcome operate from here and it is the starting point for their guided heritage walks (£5 pp) • There is a self-catering holiday flat above the Info Centre which is managed by the team • Distribution point for home composting bags which brings in local residents.

Additional models from Ross-on-Wye and Oswestry are detailed in Appendix 5.

3.4 Review of Ledbury’s Current Service

The visitor information service is currently housed in the Town Council offices, this was the result of a rescue bid when Ice Bytes cafe closed, rather than a strategic decision.

The current service has a number of weaknesses:

- **Lack of local profile** i.e. neither visitors nor businesses are aware of its presence; there is no information about it on the Town Council website, nor signage in town.
- **Limited opening hours** i.e. closed at weekends
- **Lack of dedicated space & staffing** i.e. located within the Town Council’s reception area, with limited leaflets/visitor resources. The team has other jobs to do - visitor info is an extra task and they have not received training. On an informal basis, local cafe/shop Choccotastic has tried to fill the gap with leaflets and personal advice for visitors which can be helpful when TIC is closed or not found.
- **The result: Low visitor numbers and lack of welcome. In 2024, the TIC only attracted 2,980 visitors which compared to the Heritage Centre is clearly extremely low.**

Local views were made clear in the survey with 58% of respondents rating the current service as very poor or poor. Feedback included:

- *There is little or no sign of where it is located. Often there is no obvious member of staff there, it just looks like a room full of leaflets.*
- *We don't have a tourist information centre. One like we had before that was run by Herefordshire council was the best. The ladies in there were a mine of local information. This has been lost. Needs to be returned.*
- *I am actually not aware of where the tourist information Center is anymore. We could do with Ledbury map - which is produced once a year - that folds like a little booklet (Ross on Wye does this) that points out all the local businesses, events and also nearby attractions (Westons cider, Eastnor etc).*
- *Not really aware they exist, as a local accommodation provider we never hear or speak with them.*

3.5 Outline Business Case: Options for Ledbury's Visitor Information Service

As highlighted above, running a Visitor Information Service is not a statutory duty for the Town Council. Nor is it a service which will generate sufficient income to cover costs.

However, providing visitor information does demonstrate a commitment to the local tourism sector and an investment in the ongoing success of the businesses and organisations which depend on it - both positives in terms of the Town Council's profile.

50% of enquiries to the previous TIC were from local residents. It is noted that significant housebuilding is currently underway in and around Ledbury which will increase the population. These residents will often be new to the area and their engagement with events, activities and businesses on offer locally is important (and preferable to them going elsewhere).

Given the limited ways that TICs can generate income, there cannot be an expectation that it supports itself through sales. Any revenue will be relatively minimal. That said, having a small selection of local products on sale is a nice touch and may encourage visitors to linger as they browse.

Option 1 (Preferred Option) - Relocate to Master's House

This option centres on moving to a modern, ground-floor office space in the Master's House, helping create a sense that this building is a focal point for all within the town centre. The rationale for relocating the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to the Master's House in Ledbury is grounded in the comprehensive analysis provided in the Tourism, Events and Markets Action Plan for Ledbury report earlier in 2025. This direction is preferred for several compelling reasons, which are outlined in the 5 Case Model format in Appendix 7.

Positives

- Key location, easily accessible from the main street and also where many visitors travelling by car will park.
- Heritage building, attractive to visitors and part of Ledbury's story.
- Good-sized, ground-floor room currently available.
- Blank canvas which could be themed around Ledbury's 'Box of Delights', particularly as Masefield Matters will be based upstairs.
- Sufficient space for information boards, display stands and potentially a small retail element. Could also house a community noticeboard to help attract locals and visiting friends & family, helping drive community support.
- Shared access with the Library (at the front) as well as independent access at the side, enabling flexibility with regard to opening hours. i.e. Saturday opening is essential.
- Next to St Katherine's Square & historic St Katherine's Hall - having a visitor information service here will help engender this area of town and support plans to grow markets and events.

- Potential opportunities to extend the service outdoors in the summer months e.g. under a gazebo on the Square or at the Market House.

Considerations

- The financial implications of this model include an annual rental of £6k (to Herefordshire Council) and staffing costs ranging from £30k to £35k for a full-time employee. Additional costs for signage, furniture, display stands, and computers are to be determined, but these investments are essential for creating a welcoming and informative environment for visitors. There is potential for the TIC to generate revenue through retail sales and other paid services, which can offset operational costs and contribute to its sustainability.
- Signage and signposting required.
- No 'shop front' but could use windows creatively to highlight presence and potentially other public realm activations.

Anticipated visitor figures

- Based on visitors to the Heritage Centre, the proximity of Masters House to the town centre and main car park and the popularity of TIC services with local communities as an info hub, we would anticipate annual visitors of at least 20,000.

Staffing

- **Model 1:** Town Council to employ a full-time member of staff, c£30k - £35k (plus on costs) who then manages a team of volunteers. There would also be scope for this role to include management of the market.
- **Model 2:** Town Council progresses a community-led approach, working with a charitable group to staff and manage the TIC with volunteers. N.B. Ledbury Places has indicated that they are interested in an initial discussion.
- Initial outreach has been made to members of the team which ran the TIC on The Homend. They are interested in giving their time as volunteers which would be incredibly valuable as they already have an excellent grounding in the local tourism offer. In addition, the former manager of Leominster TIC has agreed to share her expertise on a voluntary basis.
- Training of volunteers and/or paid staff is essential to ensure a high quality service. The relationship with Herefordshire County BID is critical as they will be training up county champions and front of house teams.

Resourcing

- One-off: c£8k - 10k set up including furniture, large display boards, leaflet & literature display stands, computer etc
- Annual: £30k - £35k plus on costs per annum for member of staff
- Annual: £6k rental to Herefordshire Council. Please note that David Wright, Head of economy and regeneration at Herefordshire Council, is liaising with the Estates Department to see if there is scope for this rental fee to potentially be waived for a period of 1 to 3 years.
- With regard to income, e.g. from retail sales, it is not anticipated this would exceed £1k - £2k per annum.

Option 2: Enhanced Service within Town Council Offices

An alternative, but in our view less favourable option, is to remain within the Town Council Offices but to improve the service provided by training staff members, better signposting the service in town and building relationships with tourism businesses.

Positives

- 'Free' office space
- Historic building in a key location on Church Lane, within close proximity to other heritage highlights

Considerations

- Difficult to access as it doesn't feel 'open to the public'.
- Limited opening hours e.g. closed on Saturdays - would need to be rectified.
- Principle role of this room is to act as reception to Town Council offices so not a natural fit with a TIC, nor a dedicated space available.
- As above, staff need to be trained in order to offer high quality visitor information. This may not be well received by current staff if this is not part of their job description and is seen as an extra task or a distraction from their main role and responsibilities.
- Lack of profile within town or with tourism-related businesses so signage required as well as engagement with the wider sector if this were to be the chosen route.

Option 3: Unstaffed Tourism Information Points

This is a more 'minimal' option focused on establishing mini tourism information points at several locations around town, which would centre around branded leaflet displays. Where appropriate, staff/ volunteers at those locations could be offered tourism training.

Positives

- Ensures a presence at venues of interest such as Ledbury Poetry, Heritage Centre etc as well as within shops and cafes e.g. Choccotastic is a popular leaflet pick up point.
- Minimal costs beyond the branded leaflet display, although regular leaflet 'top ups' would need to be centrally managed.

Considerations

- Service spread across multiple venues so no consistency for visitors in terms of opening times etc.
- Ideally venues/shops/cafes would agree to staff and/ or volunteers receiving training and the individuals themselves would be interested in responding to visitor enquiries.
- If various volunteers were trained up, then there would be potential for them to provide an ad hoc seasonal outdoor service, for example, under a gazebo at the Market House during Ledbury Poetry

Recommendations

Our recommendation, subject to budget availability, is to run formal TIC provision out of the Master's House (Option 1). There is potential to support this with small mini info points around town (Option 3) which then signpost a visit to the TIC for more detailed information and advice.

With regard to training volunteers and staff, the Herefordshire Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2025 - 2035 (launched April 2025) will feature a training programme for visitor-facing staff. It would make sense to partner with the Visit Herefordshire LVEP on the delivery of this training locally.

3.6 Visitor Information Requirements

Ledbury visitor leaflet & map

- Recently commissioned by Ledbury Town Council to include a map, seasonal highlights, heritage attractions and promotion of the town's cafes and shops.
- To be distributed via visitor information service, community venues (e.g, Heritage Centre) and traders/ cafes.
- Recommended that Town Council looks into distribution via accommodation providers in and around Ledbury e.g. Much Marcle, Putley, Colwall etc.
- Potential to promote the town much further afield, as indicated in Section 1, targeting those geographic and social-demographic areas with a propensity to visit and spend.

Information Boards

- Through Herefordshire County BID, new information boards are being produced for location at Tescos, St Katherine's Walk and the High Street. These will feature a town map and key content from the new visitor leaflet, such as the heritage attractions.
- There is currently not sufficient budget to have a board at the train station but this needs to be a future priority. The team has identified the appropriate contact and will share details so that this conversation can be pursued.

Working with retailers - visitor information insert

- Traders mentioned that they are frequently asked for recommendations regarding places to eat and shop.
- There is general consensus that a simple print out with the latest information would be really handy and something the traders would be willing to distribute,
- This could work as a stand alone piece of visitor collateral as well as a useful insert into the visitor leaflet. It could also be added as a download to the Visit Herefordshire website i.e. Ledbury town page.
- To be updated on a quarterly or six-monthly basis.
- N.B. This is not currently funded but would only be a small expense to print once it has been formatted

Visit Herefordshire map

- Visit Herefordshire also produces a fold-out map which promotes the county as a whole. The Ledbury edition has a map which spotlights Ledbury town centre.
- Again, this will be a useful asset for the TIC.
- Other print materials are currently being printed, such as a new Herefordshire Trail guide, which it would be useful to stock.

3.7 Additional Services

As a rule, TICs are a subsidised service and it can be difficult to prove their 'value' beyond the anecdotal.

Adding paid-for services to the mix is a way of making the TIC more commercially viable. These services can also contribute to grounding the TIC into the community, enabling it to act as a 'hub'.

There is scope to learn from successful visitor information services about the positive additions they have made to the standard service provision.

For example, could e-bike hire be an option? Ebikes are a growing trend and a hire service is currently not available in Ledbury. There is an opportunity to assess the potential for this idea by securing a trial number of e-bikes (e.g. 4 to begin with) as part of a pilot. There could also be potential to run 'guided' bike rides for an additional fee.

Secure storage is, of course, a necessity so this may prove the sticking point but partnerships could potentially be brokered with St Katherine's Hall or even The Feathers. Grant support would be required to fund the purchase of the e-bikes e.g. Shared Prosperity Fund.

Likewise, guided heritage walks or countryside rambles could potentially be offered by the visitor information service to help create a small income stream. As noted, promoting these ticketed experiences via third-party sites with a far greater audience can also be a means of encouraging visits in the first instance.

Finally, on a different note, an idea which came out of the consultation was the establishment of a 'Volunteer Bank' to enable a more structured approach to the management of volunteers across heritage attractions and the TIC.

Section 4 - Festivals & Events

Requirement: Explore opportunities for an improved range of festivals and events in Ledbury, building on existing successful events, such as the Ledbury Poetry Festival and events run by the nearby Eastnor Castle.

4.0 Introduction

Explore opportunities for an improved range of festivals and events in Ledbury, building on existing successful events, such as the Ledbury Poetry Festival and events run by nearby Eastnor Castle.

4.1 Summary of stakeholder engagement conclusions

The team engaged extensively with Ledbury Poetry as well as Eastnor Castle. Festivals and events has also, of course, been a key theme throughout the project in relation to wider consultation with stakeholders, including a stand alone focus group. We identified a strong consensus view as follows:

- Despite some very positive and successful individual initiatives (which validate the current and potential demand for events and festivals), Ledbury's overall festival and events offer definitely has potential for development.
- Local and regional festivals (Abergavenny Food Festival, Three Choirs Festivals, Hay Festival, Three Counties Show) provide examples of what success looks like and contribute to a spike in local retail trade.
- The town has significant potential to support its visitor economy by developing a more compelling and rounded festival offer.
- Festivals and events have an important role to play in engaging future residents of planned new houses in Ledbury and in maintaining community cohesion.
- The potential geographical audience for festivals and events in Ledbury reaches as far as Birmingham, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and the Cotswolds.
- Any new festivals should ideally be aligned to Ledbury's 'values' and DNA.
- Any new festival in the town could potentially coincide with an existing festival in the wider county/region, to maximise the visitor offer, footfall and dwell-time in Ledbury.
- There is a need for more collaboration and communication between existing and future festival stakeholders, both within Ledbury and also in Herefordshire as a whole, in order to avoid duplication.
- The development and management of new festivals and events may be constrained by current management capacity and resources.

4.2 Current economic context

The Festivals and Events Strategic Framework for Herefordshire 2025-29 (February 2025), commissioned by Herefordshire Council identifies the opportunities and challenges for the wider county which are relevant to Ledbury, as follows:

Opportunities

- Place-making and perception
- Preservation of local culture and community cohesion
- Visitor economy
- Job creation

Challenges

- Funding and commercial viability
- Role of the Local Authority
- Competitive USP
- Human resources and capacity
- Inclusivity
- Sustainability

The report has been produced against a backdrop of pressures on cost of living, rising operational costs and weaker consumer demand which, in the case of Ledbury, have led to the cancellation of the highly-regarded El Dorado festival in 2025.

This context underlines the importance of the Ledbury Poetry Festival as a highly distinctive asset with a successful track record both in visitor engagement and national fundraising.

4. 3 Existing festivals and events

Ledbury Poetry Festival

The Ledbury Poetry Festival was founded in 1996 by a group of local poetry enthusiasts and it is now the largest poetry festival in the UK. Over 1,000 national and international poets have taken part in the festival and its cultural significance is widely recognised, with the Guardian describing it in 2009 “as the largest of its kind in the UK and also the most energised, giving a real sense of poetry as an important living, contemporary literary form”.

The festival relies on third party support for its commercial viability and it has secured funding from the Arts Council and a range of local and national philanthropic sources. It is one of Herefordshire’s six Arts Council-funded National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and its cultural and economic significance within Ledbury was underpinned in 2021 with the rebranding of their current home (owned by Ledbury Places) as the Poetry House. Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund underwrote initial repairs and they are currently in the process of securing further funding for a full refurbishment of the building and, ultimately, for an acquisition of the freehold.

The festival’s main programme is delivered over two weeks in the summer but its work continues throughout the year with sustained engagement with local primary schools and the wider Ledbury community.

Plans are in train for a new Winter Weekend which will present the opportunity to bring in visitors off season. At this initial stage, it is envisaged as an event that would be hosted in a variety of venues around town and dovetail with the Christmas lights switch on.

The Poetry Festival is Ledbury’s most significant festival, benefiting from a national - if not international - reputation within literary circles. Its role as an enabler of tourism and visitor spend within the town is more complex. The festival’s management team has had an ambition for some time to work with Herefordshire Council and other stakeholders to brand Ledbury as the ‘Poetry Town’, in the same way that Hay-on-Wye is officially recognised as ‘the town of books’, and platform signage at Ledbury Station already recognises that vision.

However, stakeholder engagement for this commission revealed that:

- The festival’s connection with the wider community of Ledbury has atrophied in recent years, leading to low-level resentment of its prominent role. The team is fully confident that the festival’s director, Amy Howard, is acutely aware of this disconnect and is making every effort to engage with the town’s wider community to restore a unified sense of purpose.
- The festival’s audience is primarily local and regional, although it does attract visitors from further afield, in particular from London.
- There is a perception in some quarters that the direct and indirect benefits of the festival to independent retailers and F&B operators in the town are quite limited.

- There is a consensus stakeholder view that the realisation of Ledbury's full potential as a visitor destination cannot and should not rely solely on the Poetry Festival and that any future marketing initiatives should reflect the town's broader appeal.

We are confident that these 'connectivity' issues can be managed effectively with a more structured engagement framework (e.g. extended TEMAP membership) and better communication. It is noted that the Festival has fully engaged in this commission.

In the future, the Poetry Festival can play a pivotal role in driving forward Ledbury's identity as a highly distinctive and compelling visitor destination, for instance with the successful refurbishment of the Poetry House and collaborating with the town as a whole on 'Box of Delights' brand messaging.

This theme would be further reinforced through the Masfield Matters project (which celebrates the life of Ledbury poet, John Masfield) which could have real potential to capture visitors' attention.

Christmas Late Night Shopping

With minimal funding and intensive volunteer engagement, Ledbury's late night shopping event has had a dramatically positive, albeit short-lived, impact on the visitor economy. Anecdotal evidence indicates strong footfall and sales on the night itself as well as the next day due to overnight stays. Stakeholder engagement revealed strong demand to extend the Late night Shopping from one weekend to two, which we would also support. Furthermore, we would suggest testing Sunday opening on these two weekends too (already offered by some retailers in the run up to Christmas).

World Book Day

Since 2022, Ledbury has actively participated in World Book Day, with a busy programme of activities and events. Children's authors and illustrators are invited to the town, which has produced a rich calendar of craft workshops, storytelling, stay and play sessions with book characters. This year, The Beefy Boys were parked in the main car park, with tables and chairs set out on St Katherine's Square for diners.

This initiative is a great example of the potential for Ledbury to leverage its identity as a literary hot spot (Poetry Festival), generating economic activity and supporting community cohesion.

Eastnor Castle

Eastnor Castle lies 2.6 miles outside Ledbury and attracts significant numbers of day trippers to the castle and grounds, plus its supporting programme of events, which include the Chilli Festival and a busy summer calendar. In addition, Eastnor Deer Park plays host to a variety of externally-managed and promoted events, such as Lakefest, The Malverns Classic Mountain Bike Festival, and, until recently, El Dorado (cancelled due to the escalating costs). Meanwhile, The Woodshed is an outdoor cafe space which attracts large visitor numbers and is increasingly used as a meeting point for people arriving from further afield.

The Castle Estate has been used for years as a secret test facility to refine and test the off-road capability of every new Land Rover, the vehicle adapted by and most commonly associated with the early SAS Regiment.

The promotional relationship is of particular importance in relation to Eastnor, with regard to encouraging return visits to the area. For example, a Ledbury info board and leaflet display at The Woodshed would be valuable to the town.

Heritage Open Days

Ledbury actively participates in this national event in early September and produces a visitor guide as well as audio trail.

Herefordshire Art Week

Another popular event in September is Herefordshire Art Week with local galleries and artists opening their doors. Hosted around the same time as Heritage Open Days, it attracts a similar audience, referred to by Visit Herefordshire as ‘cultural explorers’.

N.B. A full spreadsheet of events has been compiled by the team and is available under separate cover from the Town Clerk.

4.4 New festival proposals

Stakeholder engagement revealed three potentially viable new festival proposals which could leverage different elements of Ledbury’s current identity, add significantly to its visitor offer and work within the town’s existing calendar of festivals and events.

Herefordshire Wine (and Cheese) Festival

The rapid emergence of Herefordshire as a leading English wine producer in the last 10 years has occurred without any coordinated promotion. There are now a number of established vineyards (Wythall Estate, Coddington, Frome Valley, Black Mountain, Foxbury Fields, Radlow Hundred, Two Beacons) and one cassis and sparkling wine producer (White Heron) in the county. For this critical mass of producers, a festival would offer a visible marketing platform and serve to attract visitors to Ledbury. There is also potential to extend to three counties producers, such as the Three Choirs vineyard over the border in Gloucestershire, said to be England’s oldest vineyard.

The town has a variety of interesting internal spaces which could be mobilised at minimal cost and the festival could potentially lubricate visitor spend for independent retail. The owners of Hay Wines (established in Ledbury in 2009), Jane and Chris Salt, have extensive experience in managing events and are fully supportive of this initiative but they recognise the need for a co-ordinating body to facilitate logistics, marketing etc (see below). Furthermore, an initial conversation with Wythall Estate has proved promising.

A Herefordshire wine festival would also provide an opportunity to collaborate with the county’s numerous independent cheese-producers, artisan bakers and farm shops (Monkland, Oakchurch, Peter Cook’s Bread, Legges of Bromyard etc) and the festival could potentially extend to street food provision.

It is difficult to quantify with any confidence the likely sustainable impact of an independent wine and cheese festival in Ledbury but it is worth noting that the Abergavenny Food Festival (established in 1999) attracts around 35,000 visitors and generates approximately £4 million for the local economy. The impact of this festival could potentially be amplified with coordination with other high-profile regional festivals and events (Blossomtime, Three Counties Show).

Herefordshire Design Fair

The grandfather of 21st century place-making, Richard Florida, wrote “Places that succeed in attracting and retaining creative class people prosper; those that fail don’t” and the self-reinforcing economic benefits of clustering have been demonstrated again and again, from Renaissance Florence to Silicon Valley.

Ledbury is the home of three highly distinctive and acclaimed interior design businesses: **Tinsmiths** (Linen and Cotton fabrics, Lighting and Homeware), **Roger Oates Design** (flooring and home accessories) and **Hus and Hem** (Scandinavian Home Design), all situated in a cluster of cobbled alleyways off the town’s High Street.

A design fair which celebrated this clustering, which promoted Ledbury’s unique architectural and cultural heritage (opening potential opportunities for collaboration with the Poetry Festival) and which borrowed elements for Herefordshire’s cultural and creative heritage (such as the furniture and dress items in the Friars Street collections in Hereford, soon to be liberated into the new Museum in Broad Street) could only enhance and magnify the town’s identity as a place which attracts and retains creative class people.

The critical and potentially deal-breaking challenge for this initiative is the capacity constraint of the three crucial drivers mentioned above.

Land Rover event in Ledbury High Street

Drawing on the iconic heritage connection with the SAS Regiment, a one-day event focused around vintage Land Rovers would add another layer to the town's identity giving visitors more reasons to spend time and money.

Collaboration with the Land Rover experience at Eastnor Castle would bring the town and the castle together in a collaborative partnership, with direct and indirect benefits for both partners. Displaying them along the high street, with the option to have market stalls and food and drink, would create a lively, enticing new event.

The event would require few financial or logistical resources but it would involve consultation with, and approval from, Herefordshire Council's Highways Team.

Heritage September

Given that the heritage theme is so strong for the town and the Heritage Open Days have proved popular, there is scope to extend activities and deepen the visitor offer.

The programme of activity could be extended to include guided walking tours as well as family weekends with costumed staff. There is potential to create a particularly distinctive offer by tying in with natural heritage such as nearby orchards for tours and cider tastings.

Equally, collaborating with Herefordshire Art Week could be a way of showcasing heritage crafts and skills, as practised by contemporary artists and makers.

4.5 Festivals & Events: Management & Delivery

It is clear from our engagement that Ledbury has an abundance of creative and committed individuals who are heavily invested (emotionally and commercially) in the town's future success and who support the development of a more rounded and impactful festival and events programme. While we fully support that vision, we recognise weaknesses in joined-up thinking and delivery, and believe strongly that more collaboration and coordination is needed to achieve it.

To that end, our strong recommendation is the **establishment of a collaborative Festivals & Events Committee**, bringing together the Tourism arm of the Town Council, Ledbury Poetry Festival, Eastnor Castle, Hellens Manor, Three Counties Showground, Herefordshire County BID and the Ledbury Traders Association. The principal roles of this group would be calendar and fundraising collaboration, marketing support for existing and new events and the development of an integrated support framework for new events. The Town Council has a critical role to play in facilitating the establishment of this Committee and it could perhaps start from the existing Council festival and events group and be coordinated by the community engagement officer. Please note, the person in post at this time has sadly been unable to participate in any of the consultancy programme.

A precedent for this collaborative structure has been established in Hereford by Hereford City BID and the City Council. Representatives from this body have offered Ledbury support with structural development and joint communications initiatives. Bottom-up collaboration with Hereford could, in turn, feed into the evolution of a county-wide structure, including all of the market towns, tasked with promoting Herefordshire's visitor assets and ensuring maximum coordination..

4.5 Quick Wins

To capitalise on current enthusiasm and demonstrate that action is being taken, we recommend that consideration is given to delivering all or some of the following 'quick wins':

- Encourage full engagement around the Poetry Festival (summer & winter) to maximise the benefit for all, including putting some simple measurements in place to capture the impacts/areas for improvement e.g. survey post festival to traders
- Look at ways to extend Heritage Open Days & h.Art in September, as identified above.
- Test the appetite for a larger wine festival by creating a 'wine tasting & wine market' as part of July's Ledbury Celebration or to coincide with September's activities.

- Piggyback Herefordshire County BID activity - they will have a stall at key events at the Three Counties Showground and Lakefest, how can Ledbury best benefit?
- Ensure Ledbury visitor collateral is available at events venues such as Eastnor and Three Counties Showground.
- Coordinate Christmas light switch on with proposed Mistletoe Market (see Section 2) and Poetry Festival's Winter Weekend to create a real reason to visit. N.B. Marketing activity will be essential to spread the word, including working with Visit Herefordshire.

4.6 Festivals & Events Action Plan

Task	Aim to Complete	Responsible
Develop Festival and Events Committee, including clear definition of private and public roles and responsibilities and overarching strategic goal(s)	2 months	LTC and key private sector stakeholders
Review 'quick wins' and pilot activities on a 'test and learn' basis	2 months	LTC and key private sector stakeholders
Identify and agree key festival and events initiatives, including ownership, cost/ human resources, constitution, timing, phasing, scaling plan and funding.	3-6 months	Ledbury Festival and Events Committee
Collaboration and coordination with local hinterland and countywide Festivals and Events.	3 months	Ledbury Festival and Events Committee
Develop funding strategy and economic model for each new Festival/Event initiative - public and private sector sourcing.	3-6 months	Ledbury Festival and Events Committee
Agree and deliver coordinated marketing plan	6-9 months	Ledbury Festival and Events Committee

Section 5 - St Katherine's Place

Requirement: Develop an event plan for the newly created St Katherine's Square, which Ledbury Town Council has a right to occupy agreement in place with Herefordshire Council.

5.0 Introduction

St Katherine's Square is a small, modern paved area set in between the Master's House, St Katherine's Hall and The Barn.

It is in a good location in relation to the car park and main street, although not visible from The Homend. It is also fully accessible with a ramp. However, there are barriers on two sides, a distinct lack of greenery, as well as no lighting, power supply or water. These factors, combined with its small size, limit its potential as a fully-functioning event space.

47% of survey respondents had a preference for hosting events on the Square, although this view was not reflected in the one to one consultations or focus groups where larger, more impactful events were discussed. It was very much seen as an additional space.

Current usage fee is £200

5.1 Recommendations

We would recommend that the potential for St Katherine's Square is maximised as follows:

Community use & themed activities

Open it up for local rehearsals, events and activities such as Morris dancing, choirs, buskers, dance troupes, cadets/scouts/guides activities and so on to create a sense of vibrancy. This idea could be further developed into themed weekend programmes, potentially linked with Town Council initiatives. For example, a themed day such as 'Saturday Songs' would invite soloists and singing groups to showcase their voices and link with Ledbury's Got Talent.

Secondary event/market space - developed a 'historic heart of activation'

When markets or larger events are taking place in town, the Square is a useful additional/overspill space. For example, it is a great space for hosting additional market stalls. The usage demonstrated during World Book Day 2025 was ideal, with tables and chairs set out and the Beefy Boys van in close proximity. Likewise, it is a convenient additional space for The Barn's new market.

There is potential here to create a **'historic heart of activation'** in the town, stretching from the cobbles of Church Lane to the Market House, across to St Katherine's Walk to the Master's House.

Future development & management

With a relatively minor investment in electric connectivity and greenery, it would be a much more attractive and appealing space for all.

With regard to management responsibility for the square, we recommend that this is delegated to the proposed new Tourism & Markets Manager who would operate out of Master's House. Alternatively, management could be outsourced as per the response to requirement 2 regarding markets.

5.2 Action Plan: St Katherine's Square

Task	Aim to Complete	Responsible
Agree preferred usage of St Katherine's Square and proposed fees, where applicable	1 month	LTC
Agree management of St Katherine's Square and recruit/procure accordingly	2 months	LTC
Publicise options to use/hire the Square via Town Council website and other channels e.g. Facebook, physical noticeboard etc	3 months	New resource, reporting to LTC
Start to deliver the programme of events on the Square, to include community use.	3 - 9 months	New resource, reporting to LTC
Scope outline costs for electricity and greenery	3 - 4 months	LTC
Research grant opportunities to fund these costs and make applications as they arise	Ongoing	LTC
Monitor events/ community use and review feedback to steer future plans	Ongoing	New resource, reporting to LTC

Action Plan Summary - Immediate Priorities

There is no magic money tree and this report has been aware throughout of the scarcity of financial resources. However, in our various meetings, surveys and feedback loops, we have been struck by the positive attitude towards collaboration and a shared commitment to inputting skills and time to bring the plans in this report to fruition. There are more detailed plans in each section of the report and a condensed summary in a separate Action Plan section at the end. Below are the actions recommended to kick start each area this calendar year, at minimal cost but pooling the resource Ledbury has in abundance, talented people and established voluntary organisations.

Section I - TOURISM POTENTIAL

Action	Recommendation
Harness the positivity & enthusiasm created by this consultation	Share report with stakeholder group and convene a parish meeting to discuss recommendations (consultants happy to present findings).
Establish management structure	Establish structure to manage coordinated partnerships, e.g. extending membership of the TEMAP. Partners would include the Traders & Business Association, Ledbury Places, Ledbury Poetry, Hellens Manor, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire County BID etc.
Clear focus on Ledbury's tourism assets	Medieval architecture core to Ledbury proposition. Align opening times to create a more collective offer. 'Tudor Tuesday', for example. Poetry is another key 'angle'. 'Box of Delights' is an all embracing candidate for umbrella branding and theming.
More effective communications	Utilise the new leaflet and boards designs. Maintain this look and feel across communications. Distribute leaflets in new home developments and look for opportunities in neighbouring counties.
Leverage Visit Herefordshire	Feed in to VH marketing initiatives. Ledbury is a jewel in the crown. Multiple angles VH will be keen to utilise via promotion & PR (e.g. poetry, walking, history, festivals)

Section 2 - MARKETS

Action	Recommendation
Management and collaboration	<p>Establish market growth group within the TEMAP to include traders and supportive retailers. Develop a markets 'vision' consistent with Ledbury assets and quality</p> <p>Restructure market support staff to include 'on call' set-up operative and additional promotion and trader recruitment duties for town council staff member i.e. the proposed role of Tourism & Markets Manager</p>
Market Expansion	Trader recruitment for summer season.
Improve market look & practicalities	Enforce the 'no vans' rule. Start engaging with Herefordshire Council to amend the Tuesday TRO to finish at 2 pm.
New opening times, improved infrastructure	Extend Saturday operating hours to 8am to 4pm. Investigate costs and funding avenues to allow Improved lighting and seating, changes to the public realm to increase the market footprint and potential amends to parking arrangements.(do this alongside investment needs of St Katherine's Place - see section 5)
Markets linked to events	Attach expanded market days to events such as Winter Poetry Festival and Christmas Lights (potential name, Mistletoe Market). Aim to start this year.
Communication	LTC webpage should include descriptions of all markets in and around the town, accompanied by a description of the market so visitors know what to expect.

Section 3 - VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICE

Action	Recommendation
Master's House	<p>There are other options but our recommendation, and favoured by most we talked with, is to move to a modern, ground-floor office space in the Master's House, helping create a sense that this building is a focal point for all within the town centre.</p> <p>Next to St Katherine's Square & historic St Katherine's Hall - having a visitor information service here will help energise this area of town and support plans to grow markets and events.</p>
Theming	'Box of Delights' theming (not least as Masefield Matters will be based upstairs)
Infrastructure	Would need initial investment for furniture, display, computer, leaflet stands etc.
Staff and training	Herefordshire County LVEP has a training programme for visitor-facing staff. It would make sense to partner on the delivery of this training locally.

Section 4 - FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Action	Recommendation
Collaboration & Management	Led by LTC, establish (or revive and extend existing) a collaborative Festivals & Events Committee, bringing together the tourism arm of the Town Council, Ledbury Poetry Festival, Eastnor Castle, Hellens Manor, Three Counties Showground, Herefordshire County BID and the Ledbury Traders Association. The principal roles of this group would be calendar and fundraising collaboration, marketing support for existing and new events and the development of an integrated support framework for new events.
Poetry Festival	Encourage full engagement around the Poetry Festival (summer & winter) to maximise the benefit, including simple measurements to capture the impacts/areas for improvement e.g. survey post festival to traders.
Test 'Wine Festival'	ASAP pull focus group of wine producers and Hay Wines and key members of the festival group to explore the appetite for a larger wine festival as part of July's Ledbury Celebration or to coincide with September's activities.
Christmas	Coordinate Christmas light switch on with proposed Mistletoe Market (see Section 2) and Poetry Festival's Winter Weekend to create a real reason to visit. N.B. Marketing activity will be essential to spread the word, including working with Visit Herefordshire.

Section 5 - ST KATHERINE'S

Action	Recommendation
Agree how this space is to be used	Feedback from our research is that St Katherine's is a secondary space for events, but with potential for smaller scale activities. It can also be better drawn in as part of a 'historic heart of activation' connecting the cobbles of Church Lane to the Market House, across to St Katherine's Walk to the Master's House. TEMAP and Festivals & Events Groups to consider and agree.
Community use & themed activities	Open it up for local rehearsals, events and activities such as Morris dancing, choirs, buskers, dance troupes, cadets/scouts/guides activities and so on to create a sense of vibrancy. This idea could be further developed into themed weekend programmes, potentially linked with Town Council initiatives.
Secondary event/market space	When markets or larger events are taking place in town, the Square is a useful additional/overspill space, a great space for hosting additional market stalls. The usage demonstrated during World Book Day 2025 was ideal, with tables and chairs set out and the Beefy Boys van in close proximity.
Infrastructure	With a relatively minor investment in electric connectivity and greenery, it would be a much more attractive and appealing space for all.

Appendices

APPENDIX I - Existing Reports for reference

- Potential Future Use of The Market House (Ledbury Town Council, 2024)
- Ledbury Multiple Asset Transfer Feasibility Stage Business Plan (2014)
- Increasing Tourism in Ledbury, Update Report (2024)

APPENDIX 2: Stakeholder Engagement

The following stakeholders were engaged through one-to-ones, focus groups and the workshop:

Big Apple	Ledbury Civic Society	Masefield Matters
Blandfords	Ledbury Country Markets	Max the Fishmonger
Ceci Paolo	LEAF	Prince of Wales
Chocotastic	Ledbury Food Group	Renaissance
DT Waller & Sons	Ledbury Places	Robert Wilson (flower stall)
Eastnor Castle	Ledbury Poetry	Roger Oates Design
Gill Ding, Leominster TIC	Ledbury Refugee Support Group	St Michael & All Angels Church
Gregg's Pit	Ledbury Together	Three Counties Showground
Hay Wines	Ledbury Traders Association	Tinsmiths
Hellens Manor	Market Theatre	The Barn
John Nash Interiors	Mark, the cheese stall	Woodside Lodges

APPENDIX SECTION 3: Consultation events

11 February	Online Focus Group – Festivals and Markets
13 February	Online focus Group - retail and hospitality
4 March	In person workshop

APPENDIX 4: Street Market Case Studies

Several small rural street markets across the UK have established themselves as vibrant community hubs, supporting local producers and artisans while offering unique experiences for visitors. Notable examples include:

Ruislip Duck Pond Market (rural Middlesex)

Held on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month at Manor Farm, this market is set in a picturesque, historic rural green space. It features local artists, crafters, food producers, and ethical businesses, with a strong emphasis on locally made and Fairtrade products. The market is known for its friendly atmosphere, live music, and accessibility, making it a model for small-scale markets.

Market Drayton Street Market (Shropshire)

Market Drayton, a historic market town, hosts a small but lively street market every Wednesday along Cheshire Street, complemented by an indoor market on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The market offers everything from award-winning sausages and gourmet chocolates to plants, crafts, and homewares. Its nearly 800-year history and integration with the town's independent shops and cafes highlight its role as a community anchor.

Deal Saturday Market (Kent)

Located in the heart of the Georgian conservation area, Deal's market operates every Saturday and features stalls selling locally sourced foods, flowers, antiques, and bric-a-brac. Its long-standing charter (since 1699) and focus on local produce contribute to its enduring popularity.

Sandwich Town Market (Kent)

This small, well-established market is held outside the Guildhall every Thursday and Saturday, offering baked goods, flowers, fruit, vegetables, and crafts. Its central location and variety of stalls support both residents and visitors in this rural town.

Village Hall Markets (e.g. Capel-le-Ferne and Whitfield, Kent)

Capel-le-Ferne Village Hall hosts a thriving market every Tuesday morning, with stalls selling fresh produce, crafts, and homemade goods. Whitfield Village Hall's Thursday market offers local food, crafts, and refreshments, providing a vital outlet for producers and a social space for the community.

Independent Street Artisan Markets (Northwest England)

Independent Street organizes pop-up artisan markets in small towns and villages across the Northwest, featuring local makers, bakers, and producers. These markets are known for their creativity, community spirit, and support for new businesses, making them a template for successful rural enterprise.

Hitchin Market, with roots dating back to at least the 12th century, is one of England's most historic markets. After experiencing a period of decline, the local community recognized the need for revitalisation. In response, the town partnership established Hitchin Markets Ltd in 2009, operating as a non-profit organization to benefit the town, community, and traders. Since this transition, the market has seen increased footfall and trader base, and new market events including a weekly car boot sale on Sunday mornings, and a monthly Craft & Farmers Market held on the last Saturday of every month. Hitchin Market is now one of the largest outdoor markets in the region, featuring over 150 covered stalls. It operates on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, offering a diverse range of products from antiques and collectibles to fresh produce and handmade crafts.

APPENDIX SECTION 5 - TIC

Examples of other TIC models

Ross-on-Wye	Satellite Tourism Info Points & Funded Post
Managed by	Ross-on-Wye Town Council with support from Ross-on-Wye Tourism Association
Location	Leaflet display at three 'info points' - the Town Council offices, The Market House and Truffles Delicatessen.
Opening Hours	Town Council, Monday to Friday 9.30 to 1pm Market House, daily 10am to 4pm (N.B. peppercorn rent for exhibiting artists) Truffles Delicatessen, Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 4pm
Staffing	One paid role of Tourism & Events Officer, appointed by the Town Council and working as part of the Ross-on-Wye Tourism Association which operates on a voluntary basis and members include the local traders association. Occasional ambassador team (volunteers) which is more active in busier holiday periods.
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflet display • There is some appetite for a volunteer-led TIC • They fund production of mall Town Guide (concertina fold) which goes in town and is distributed at motorway service stations, and an Event Guide, funded by Town Council. Also a small budget for updating fingerposts. • Ross on Wye Tourism Association prints the Vintage Trail, John Kyrle Trail and Heritage Trail, funded by contributions from local businesses.

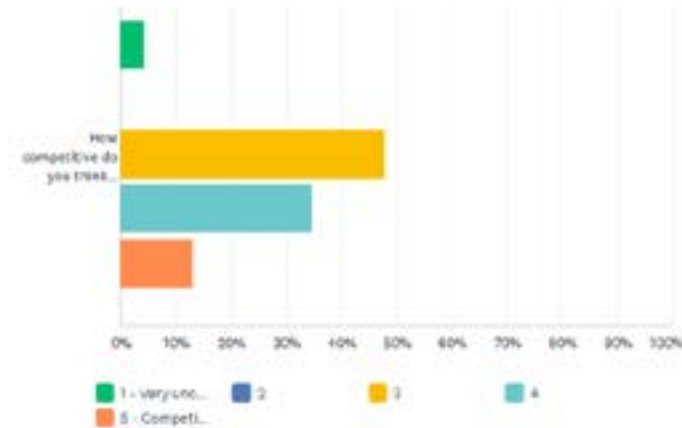
Oswestry	TIC in host building, managed by non profit company with one funded post equivalent
Managed by	Borderlands Tourism , a non profit company (directors are all volunteers) which is focused on promoting Oswestry as a destination. They have an SLA with the Town Council which covers the rent and some costs. Income from sales in TIC, event bookings etc as well as membership of Borderlands Tourism
Location	Within Market Hall
Opening Hours	Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 10am to 3pm
Staffing	4 paid part-time staff which is equal to one full-time post equivalent. Supported by volunteer Tour Guides in the summer, plus Tourism Ambassadors.
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor advice and leaflet display • Sells gifts and maps • Event box office

APPENDIX SECTION 6: Survey Results

28 in total, 24 of whom work or have a business in Ledbury. 83% consider tourism very important to their business or organisation (no respondent answered not at all important)

Summary of responses

I - How competitive is Ledbury's visitor offer?



Most respondents consider Ledbury's visitor offer is relative to be either equal or more competitive than other similar market towns within a 50-mile radius.

Supplementary comments (selection)

“ Attractive nucleated town centre. Level access to close town centre car parks. Excellent variety of independent comparison retail. Good selection of cafes and restaurants/pubs. Reasonable selection of circular and themed walks, heritage buildings free to access, greenspaces to enjoy. Markets let the town down ATM and could benefit from a dedicated Touris Office

“ What makes it a “market town”? A few stands jammed under the tiny market building? An occasional Farmer's Market in tiny Burgage Hall? We don't even have a car boot sale to offer! The Council should identify a local site and commission an open air market for genuine local PRODUCERS at least from April to September each year. If the uptake and public response is good, then funds should be sought to erect an inexpensive building to house it year round.

The 3 best things about Ledbury as a tourist attraction?

- Independent shops and attractive high street
- Pretty town with historic buildings
- Good hospitality (cafes. Restaurants, hotels etc.)

Other mentions for;

- Proximity to the Malverns, Eastnor Castle etc.
- History and culture (e.g. Poetry and Music festivals)

The 3 things Ledbury needs to improve as a tourist attraction?

- Parking (availability and pricing)
- Stronger promotion and signage
- More events and markets

Other mentions for;

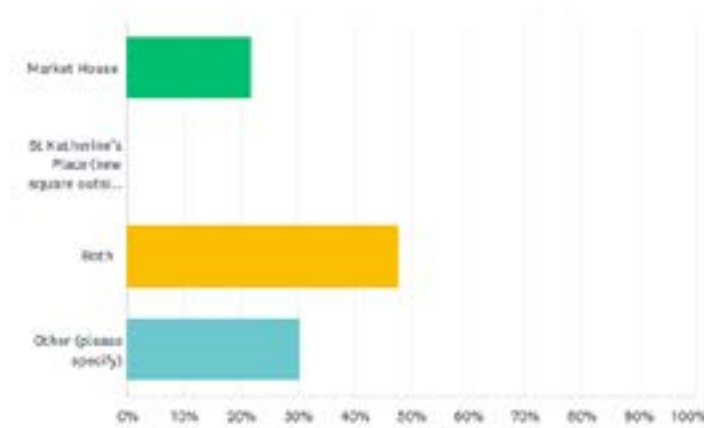
- More places to stay (and affordably).
- Creative use of disused retail premises

Markets - are there gaps in the current offer?

Comments (selection)

- “ The markets offer needs a total rethink. Lots of issues. Too many to fit in here. Tuesday Market is probably best focussing on local market - at least outside tourist/holiday season. Saturday should be more vibrant and diverse. Need to start using new St Katherine's Square to best effect and returning TRO tarmac mostly to parking by Market House. Need to use upstairs at Market House. Need to develop schedule of seasonal themed markets to broaden offer - as per Ludlow/Stroud
- “ We have a very small market in Ledbury now . Plenty of room for other stall but please only stalls that don't compete with shops eg we have a few clothes shop so not a clothes stall. More local Produce would be good
- “ The Old Market Hall and Burgage Hall are TOO SMALL and TOO INFREQUENT. You can't expect traders or visitors to be attracted by them. Frankly, I'm surprised you are calling Ledbury a "market town". On what basis? Where are the traditional street traders and entertainers? Where are the livestock? Where are the local crafts?
- “ The market is poor. We really need to create a much better Saturday market with a lot more to offer. Perhaps helping local small unique businesses. Christmas time we should be looking at a small ledbury style German market. I believe it would be incredibly successful

Best location for markets?



21% chose Market House. No respondent specifically favoured St Katherine's but 47% chose 'Both'. 30% favoured another location.

Comments (selection)

- “ The Market House acts as a natural shelter but I think we should make use of the so called Town Square especially during the Summer months
- “ being in an area surrounded by producers and artisans, we should be able to fill both spaces with a weekly market! (see Hellens produce market for inspiration)
- “ Different locations for different markets/days - it depends, and needs to ramp up gradually. Presently the Tuesday market is all but non-existent
- “ These are far too small and you need COVER for year round local traders and customers.

Potential for new specialist markets?

Comments (selection)

- “ No! Christmas markets have become so generic and have recently gained a reputation for being overpriced and not at all local. I think Ledbury needs to focus on local and independent and this should be the specialism over anything else.
- “ Perhaps, however with no indoor venues of decent size where would this be?
- “ Absolutely I am one of the traders in Ledbury who mentioned this a couple of years back about creating a small German style market with locals and handmade produce etc, there are many many talented independent businesses in the local area not just the shops
- “ Of course, but since Ledbury has almost NO Winter tourist traffic and there is nowhere in Ledbury suitable FOR a covered Christmas market, and Ledbury does not have SUFFICIENT PARKING to make one viable, it won't work! There will be a howl of protest if you close the main street and tent over it to run one because there isn't the parking needed. You need a regular market site OUTSIDE the town with its own parking.

Rate the following events and festivals in terms of generating trade in the town (weighted averages; listed in order)

Event	Weighted average
Late Night Christmas Shopping	3.78
Ledbury Poetry Festival	3.57
Royal Three Counties Show	3.57
RHS Spring & Autumn Shows	3.52
h.art Week	3.26
Big Breakfast	3.14
Lakefest (Eastnor)	3.14
Christmas Light Switch On	3.00
Chilli festival (Eastnor)	2.86
Malvern GT (Eastnor)	2.64
Hills Ford Rally	2.27
Summer of Fun (Herefordshire County BID)	2.26

Comments (selection)

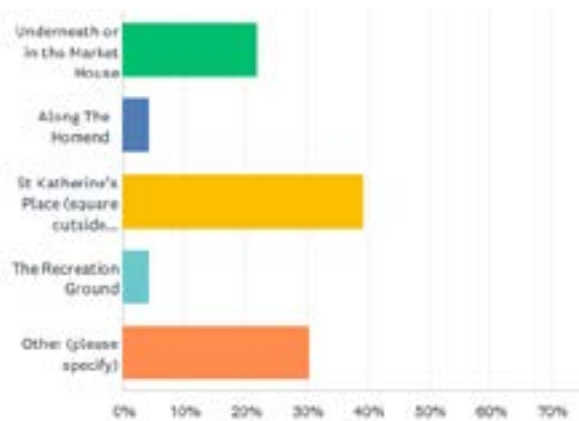
- “ Festivals at Eastnor certainly attract visitors, although mainly they do their food shopping to return to Eastnor. The poetry festival has always been very inclusive to local people, although I Hear that this year they are going to make it more open and more easily accessible.
- “ Oh come on! Malvern Showground and Eastnor have the grounds, buildings and parking needed. Ledbury does not. I live here and I've never HEARD of “Big Breakfast” or “Summer of Fun”.

Benefits to hosting more events in town?

Comments (selection)

- “ Not until we have got better at gearing off the events that already exist that are being organised already by others
- “ It depends entirely on the quality and nature of the events. Ledbury should aim for a small number of things done well. h.art and the Poetry Festival are high quality and present the best face of the area.
- “ Hosting more events in town would be beneficial to the footfall and trade for both retail and hospitality.
- “ Yes, events done well with great marketing will always be positive. A complete calendar of events gives people from the surrounding counties to visit Ledbury.

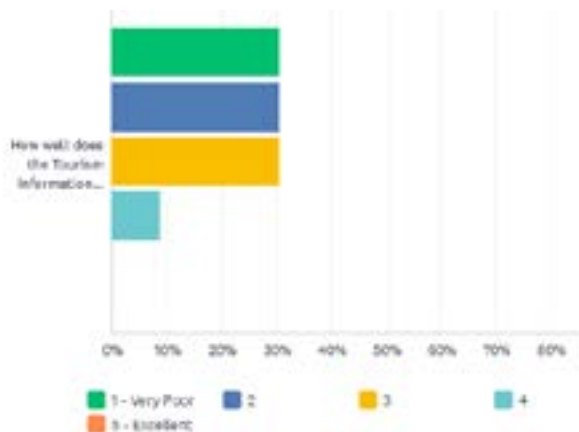
Preference for best location for events?



Comments (selection)

- “ The Market House but would love to have activities in the Homend alongside.
- “ It would depend on the type of event. Generally in the town works very well when the high street is closed from the clock tower to the top cross. This causes minimal obstruction as other flows of traffic are available. I think this would be suited for a Christmas market in the high street.

How well does the Tourism Information Centre support visitors and encourage them to spend more time in Ledbury?



Comments (selection)

- “ Would be better located in the Master's House, along with the Town Council itself
- “ There is little or no sign of where it is located. Often there is no obvious member of staff there, it just looks like a room full of leaflets
- “ We don't have a tourist information centre. One like we had before that was run by Herefordshire council was the best. The ladies in there were a mine of local information. This has been lost. Needs to be returned
- “ I am actually not aware of where the tourist information Center is anymore. We could do with Ledbury map - which is produced once a year - that folds like a little booklet (Ross on Wye does this) that points out all the local businesses, events and also nearby attractions (Westons Cider, Eastnor etc)
- “ Not really aware they exist, as a local accommodation provider we never hear or speak with them

APPENDIX SECTION 7: Visitor Information Outline 5 Business Case Model Rationale

The rationale for relocating the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) to the Master's House in Ledbury is grounded in the comprehensive analysis provided in the Tourism, Events and Markets Action Plan for Ledbury. It follows from a detailed options appraisal set out above. This model is preferred for several compelling reasons, which are outlined below in the 5 Case Model format.

Strategic Case

Relocating the TIC to the Master's House aligns with the strategic goal of making this historic building a focal point in the town centre. The Master's House, with its rich heritage and central location, is ideally positioned to attract visitors and support community engagement. By leveraging the building's historical significance, the TIC can enhance the visitor experience and contribute to the town's cultural narrative. The move also supports the broader objective of revitalising Ledbury's tourism sector by creating a central hub that draws in both locals and tourists.

Economic Case

The economic benefits of relocating the TIC to the Master's House are significant. The available ground-floor space is relatively small but offers opportunities to be themed and utilised for multiple purposes, including a small retail element, which can generate a low level of additional revenue. The annual rental cost of £6k is a reasonable investment considering the potential economic returns from increased visitor footfall and spending.

The central location of the Master's House ensures easy access for visitors, which can boost local businesses and contribute to the overall economic vitality of Ledbury.

Commercial Case

The commercial viability of the TIC at the Master's House is enhanced by shared access with the Library, flexible opening hours, and potential outdoor extensions during the summer months. These factors provide a versatile and attractive proposition for visitors. The staffing models include employing a full-time staff member or adopting a community-led approach with volunteers, both of which offer sustainable options for managing the TIC. The community-led approach, in particular, can foster local involvement and ownership, further embedding the TIC within the fabric of Ledbury's community. Furthermore, the TIC could act as the base for both the Community Development Officer and the proposed Markets Manager, helping strengthen relationships between Town Council staff and the local community.

Financial Case

The financial implications of this model include an annual rental of £6k and staffing costs ranging from £30k to £35k for a full-time employee. Additional costs for signage, furniture, display stands, and computers are to be determined, but these investments are essential for creating a welcoming and informative environment for visitors. The financial case is strengthened by the potential for the TIC to generate revenue through retail sales and other paid services, which can offset operational costs and contribute to its sustainability.

Management Case

Effective management of the TIC involves either employing a full-time staff member to oversee operations and manage volunteers or partnering with a charitable group to run the centre. Training for volunteers and/or paid staff is crucial to ensure a high-quality service. Support from Herefordshire County BID for training county champions and front-of-house teams will be instrumental in achieving this. The management case emphasizes the importance of structured and professional oversight to maximize the TIC's impact and ensure its smooth operation.

Summary

In conclusion, relocating the Tourist Information Centre to the Master's House offers a strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and managerial advantage that makes it the preferred option for enhancing Ledbury's visitor information service. This move not only leverages the historical and central location of the Master's House but also provides a sustainable and community-focused model that can significantly.



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