

LOVE ARUNDEL? YOU TALKED! THE ARUNDEL PROJECT UPDATE

Introduction

Why the Arundel Project was set up

The Arundel Project is the result of resident conversations in early 2019, on the fragility of our High Street and key events such as Candlelight and Festival. There was a feeling most residents love living in Arundel, a special place set in an outstanding context, but there were increasing concerns about our economic viability and sustainability. The concerns included banks closing, a challenging year for the Festival and Candlelight events, Sparks Yard and other shop and restaurant closures, and the plight of the Great British High Street in the news daily. This created a feeling that we needed to do something proactive and not just sit back and watch it decline. Arundel has so much potential that this need not be the outcome.

There was also a sense that it was difficult to find out information about the various volunteer led local clubs and community groups, and that better communication could help bring the community closer together.

So in the first half of 2019 the group engaged with various stakeholder groups in Arundel. There was general support for the project, and so it kicked off formally over the summer.

Objectives of the Arundel Project

We are a group of people from the community who believe Arundel would benefit from a co-ordinated, community approach to the challenges market towns like Arundel are facing in the 21st century. Our objectives are: -

- To strengthen our community and increase communication throughout it
- To encourage clubs, arts and events run by volunteers and residents who are keen to share their passion
- To increase the number of residents and visitors using the town facilities across the year without creating additional massive spikes in footfall
- To encourage vibrant, sustainable attractions, events, experiences and retail opportunities for residents and visitors alike to continue to enjoy
- To promote and market our town and its attractions to a wider audience for the benefit of all

Approach

Over the last six months the Arundel Project has conducted a number of listening sessions and workshops in town

- *Residents* - 6 meetings, 200 residents, 1700 post it note comments
- *Attractions* - individual and joint meetings with Castle, Lido, Cathedral, Museum, WWT and Castle cricket
- *Traders* - 3 meetings and conversations with 30-40 traders

- *Accommodation providers* - 10 providers including Norfolk Hotel, Amberley Cottages and Laura Lye together letting over 100 rooms / properties in Arundel
- *Professional services* – 10 businesses

There have also been meetings with Arundel Town Council (ATC), Arun District Council (ADC), Earl Henry and the managers of the Castle, the Norfolk Estate and the Angmering Estate, and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

The thinking has also been informed by a number of benchmarking exercises including:

- Reviewing the mission, objectives, budgets, staff structures and websites of a number of other Town Councils
- Benchmarking the 'Visit XXX' town websites of around 20 other towns
- Visiting a number of other Farmers Markets in the area
- Supporting the Festival committee by driving a review of the 2019 Arundel festival
- Visits to Frome, Padstow, St.Ives and Tavistock

And by reading a number of research pieces commissioned by West Sussex County Council (WSCC), ADC, Visit Britain; council policy documents relating to the current period and the South Downs National Park (SDNP) objectives.

Objectives of this paper

This paper shares the findings of the Arundel project's insight process, and some thoughts on the emerging opportunities for action by key leadership and stakeholder groups, residents and volunteers, as well as which of these groups might be best placed to own them.

8 key themes have emerged around what residents and businesses want

1. Easier and safer to get around
2. Welcome to Arundel – greener, cleaner and more visitor friendly
3. Economic Growth Strategy
4. Year-round events
5. Making the most of our iconic buildings
6. Gateway to the SDNP and Arun Valley
7. Resident communication and Visitor marketing
8. Proactive, collaborative leadership

EASIER AND SAFER TO GET AROUND

Getting into, out of, and around Arundel by foot, bike, train and car is full of challenges for residents, workers and visitors alike.

Parking

The majority of trips in and out of Arundel are by car. 90% of visitors arrive by car / camper van, and many town centre residents do not have parking and so 'compete' with visitors and workers for what free parking there is. Businesses say parking is a logistical and cost challenge for workers, many of whom are minimum wage shop and restaurant staff.

All the groups want more capacity, annual (discounted) disc schemes for residents, businesses and workers, extended restricted free street parking from one hour to two and better arrangements for residents during event road closures. In the past residents have turned down a residents parking permit scheme and this idea did not come up once in our discussions.

Initial benchmarking of parking costs vs. nearby towns such as Steyning, Petworth and Shoreham indicated parking in Arundel is relatively expensive. One challenge is our main car parks being operated by different bodies (Lido, Castle and ADC) and so a Town wide approach would require collaboration between these different operators.

There is frustration at the library car park being closed much of the time. Residents would like to see a facility for camper vans to overnight (with bathroom facilities), and to stop them parking overnight in Mill Rd. There is a desire for electric vehicle charging points around town and also a need for secure bike 'parking' in town.

Public transport to Arundel

The train station is a positive for Arundel - it attracts visitors, makes Arundel a suitable location for businesses with London clients and helps meet the definition of a 'gateway' to the SDNP, and it has adequate parking.

However there is frustration with the reducing number of train and bus routes, insufficient frequency of service on remaining routes especially at night, and poor linkages, e.g. long waits for connections at Ford when travelling to Littlehampton. This affects residents and workers, in some cases making it a challenge for local businesses to recruit.

The proposed Arundel chord rail line which would link Arundel directly to the Brighton route without changing at Ford could have a positive impact for the town, but getting to and from Littlehampton, Barnham and Chichester is higher up the agenda.

Getting around locally - within Arundel and nearby

There is big demand for better connected, safe, lit foot / cycle paths linking the town centre with the two stations and residential areas for day to day commuting.

Many of our secondary school children commute to Barnham and Chichester for school and the biggest single ask is for a safe, lit foot / cycle path along the Ford Road to Ford station, and a very strong view this should NOT be along the river as it needs to be safe to use as a commuter route all year round by all age groups. Building such a path here

is aligned with the objectives of WSCC, ADC, and the SDNP, as well as being something the development of 90 new houses on the Ford Road, and the potential A27 bypass crossing the Ford Road could both contribute to.

Thereafter walking to Arundel station without having to keep crossing the road, a footpath from Swanbourne Lake to the Black Rabbit and crossing town on a cycle route are other examples of the resident ask. A number of organisations e.g. SDNP and Sustrans have objectives to drive more sustainable travel such as walking and cycling and may support.

Many also feel a community bus that runs between the town centre, 2 stations, residential areas and surrounding villages is needed to support those without their own transport, the elderly and to reduce car usage/parking issues. It is unlikely such a service would be commercially viable and so would need to be publicly funded and / or run by volunteers to be viable.

Road safety

There are a number of requests to improve safety and reduce rat runs through Arundel. Requests include pedestrian crossings in town (High Street and Post office roundabout), to improve Ford roundabout safety for drivers, bikes and pedestrians, use traffic calming, and enforce speed limits, HGV access times, camper vans overnight parking and parking restrictions generally.

The future of the car

Arundel was not designed for the car but it now dominates the town. Being a pedestrian in Arundel is not a great experience. Whilst many predict radical change over the next 10-20 years, (with private car ownership dropping in lieu of electric, self driving hire as you go vehicles freeing up car parks and home parking spaces), we need to begin shifting the balance and improve the pedestrian experience in town.

OPPORTUNITY

Acting on the above to improve our transport issues will require significant collaborative working between a number of layers of public and private bodies.

The two clear priority projects are developing and implementing a 'whole town' parking strategy, and building a safe, lit foot / cycle path from Arundel to Ford Station.

Arundel Town Council are probably best placed to drive this agenda, and we can share our research in more detail (Traffic and Access Committee?)

Please note the A27 by pass was out of scope for our discussions

'WELCOME TO ARUNDEL' - GREENER, CLEANER, AND VISITOR FRIENDLY

Arundel is a beautiful town with a fabulous historical and natural heritage. However, there is a strong view that we should improve our presentation - be greener, cleaner and tidier; show more civic pride; be more visitor friendly; and celebrate our history, heritage and creative arts more visibly.

Planting

There was a significant call for more planting of flowers, trees and wildlife / insect friendly habitats in and around town. The idea of a hanging basket scheme, which works like the Xmas trees was mooted and there is energy to support the Bee project.

There are many stakeholders who could play a role including existing supporters such as the Rotary, Gardeners Club and Aldingbourne Trust, as well as the Castle gardening team, Estates, Wetlands, The Rail Line Community partnership, Ford Prison and SDNP who have skills, resources and passion for gardening and plants. The new 'Bee friendly town' initiative aligns perfectly with this project. A greener Arundel is also easy for residents to get involved with, even if just placing a plant pot outside their house.

Maintenance of roundabouts and grass verges was seen as an issue. WSCC is accountable for this but it is something ATC could consider taking accountability for. The roundabouts could be fantastic entries to town and with the high volume of passing traffic there must be an opportunity to have them sponsored.

More bins including re-cycling

There is a strong feeling the town could be cleaner with calls for more street bins around town (including plastic/ recycling), more dog poo bins and a big demand for more large recycling / bottle banks as we only have Canada Road which is often overflowing. And in all cases a need for regular emptying. Residents also want to see more effort to enforce fines for dog owners who don't pick up, litter droppers and fly tippers.

Street cleaning, bin provision and emptying is owned by ADC who outsource to Biffa, and so we would need to engage with the ADC team to deliver this.

Community 'Spring Clean' event

There is some energy for a community 'Spring Clean' event in which residents, shops, landlords would be encouraged to both give their own property a 'spruce up' and be encouraged to join up with the rest of their street to work public/ community spaces too. Again the estates, local businesses and community groups could be encouraged to sponsor the event and/or get involved.

Benches and picnic tables

There are very few places in Arundel to sit outside, enjoy the wonderful views and watch the world go by. There is a lot of energy to significantly increase the number of benches and picnic tables around the town centre, in Arundel Park and along the river. This should be very achievable working with the Estates, SDNP and ATC.

Public toilets

We are embarrassed by our public toilets, and want to see standards improved. We could learn from other towns' 'You're Welcome' schemes where shops, restaurants, bars offer use of their facilities and a free water top up even for non customers.

Visitor Maps and signage

There is an opportunity to move to a single map design as we have a number of different designs in use on noticeboards and in leaflets at the moment. There is a similar opportunity to review the pedestrian signage in place.

Visitor centre

Many people are not aware that the Museum provide visitor centre services, as it's not particularly visible or well sign posted, and this could be a missed opportunity. There is a view that we need a visitor centre in the centre of town promoting what the town has to offer. (maybe combined with a community centre).

Celebrate history, heritage, nature and art around town

Arundel has a rich heritage in history, nature and creativity. There is a big opportunity to more visibly celebrate and promote this around town. Ideas include: -

- a programme of creative installations such as art and sculptures (could be run by the Gallery Trail / in town galleries / local artists)
- historical photographs placed to show how the same location looked in the past
- making something of the Friary ruins
- creating story telling trails and itineraries such as history, architecture, and nature with signage, maps and apps so that those that don't want a guided tour can self tour when it suits them.
 - Local historians and the museum could help, as could the Attractions, e.g. a tour round the Castle continues with a history tour of town

OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of residents, community groups and businesses, which may champion elements of the above based on their skills, resources and passions. Plus a number of charities, grants and council initiatives, which could also help.

The Arundel Community Partnership (ACP) could play a role in actively looking for and supporting volunteers to progress with these deliverables. The ACP could also support volunteers with grant funding applications to relevant bodies.

The priority projects are: -

- planting – flowers, trees, bee and wildlife friendly habitats
- more bins – street, dog poo and bottle banks with regular emptying
- spring clean event – involving residents, community groups and businesses
- benches and picnic tables – in town centre, Arundel Park and along the river

ADC is accountable for waste management and also for maintaining the grass verges and roundabouts. ATC could consider taking control for these back from ADC. Some towns have 'Town Ranger' roles (some paid and some on a voluntary basis), which are there to weed and water town centre planting, to clean and tidy as needed and to help visitors. Arundel could consider such roles.

DEVELOPING THE TOWN OFFER TO DRIVE FOOTFALL AND SPEND

Whilst some residents would prefer less tourists and visitors, the very significant majority recognise that without them, even fewer of our shops, restaurants and pubs would survive and that is not what residents want.

There is a clearly recognised need to develop the experience Arundel offers to create new reasons for: -

- residents to come into Arundel for fun and leisure all year round
- visitors to choose Arundel all year round
- new businesses to locate in Arundel

all of which can support local jobs and grow the economy.

We have insights on what each stakeholder group is looking for.

Residents

Residents value their recreation time, want to spend it in town, and are brimming with ideas. There is demand for more events across the year, and for more contemporary breadth in the High Street offer. And more outdoor activities, clubs, and community support groups with the right facilities.

Events

There is strong consensus that we should keep and support our existing events, specifically revive and grow the Farmers Market, and keep but evolve Festival and Candlelight. As part of this project we conducted a review of the 2019 Arundel Festival and benchmarked a number of Farmers Markets – there are recommendations for each.

There is a desire for a broader programme of events all year round, across town and with something for everyone – residents, visitors, kids, big/small, indoor/outdoor etc.

- varied markets – French, vintage, recycling etc.
- quality cultural/ arts events such as talks, poetry, literary, book, theatre, niche film
- music events – all music types, and including local musicians
- indoor and outdoor cinema events – especially for children, and niche films
- seasonal events like Halloween, Bonfire Night, St. Georges Day etc.
- food and drink festivals, wellbeing festival, walking festival, film festival
- embrace and expand the bigger Castle events into the town centre e.g. jousting
- events for kids such as dance, music, Arundel's Got Talent, art, cricket
- more events at the Castle for residents, e.g. Christmas party
- decorating the town to tie in with events (flags, bunting etc. similar to Xmas trees)
- indoor /covered venues to allow us to hold winter events.

Many want temporary pedestrianisation for events to create traffic free safe spaces in which to shop, be entertained and eat and drink outside. Some want more permanent areas, with a one-way system around town to facilitate it, and others want 'cobbling' to create zones where cars share with pedestrians but do not have right of way.

There is significantly more support for some sort of pedestrianisation than not, with the few concerns coming from Tarrant Street traders who are against the street being shut too much of the time, and those residents directly affected by road closures.

The more permanent and costly ideas such as cobbling and one-way systems should be part of the Neighbourhood Plan process alongside other ideas for improving the public realm. In the short term a focus on temporary closures for markets and events will help us all to understand the benefits and implications, in particular closing the High Street from the Norfolk Arms to Sims Williams, and with temporary 2-way traffic on the other side (past Pizza Express) to avoid knock on disruption to other roads.

Residents feel it needs to be easier to plan, organise and operate events. There is a view we are too reliant on volunteers and that major events need support from paid resource to project manage, and manage health and safety and other regulatory obstacles.

And finally on events, residents would like to see much improved communication of what events are happening, where and when.

High Street offer

Residents would like the shops and restaurants to remain independent, quirky and local but see an opportunity for a more joined up approach including: -

- consistent opening times, being open when they say, and overlap between the current 5-7pm deadtime.
- joined up marketing to visitors and also incentives such as loyalty cards / happy hours for residents
- a set of 'property standards' (e.g. how they are maintained, use of lit/neon signs, no chains etc.) that landlords and shop owners would be encouraged to adhere to in order to maintain an attractive, quirky High Street

The biggest ask is for more contemporary breadth and variety in the High Street offer. There is a desire for more variety and differentiation in the shops, local product, and better quality. Specific shops wanted include a chemist, hardware store, bank, greengrocer, fishmonger, outdoor clothing and equipment shop, community sharing / recycling, and beauty products.

Others feel too many have changed their shopping habits (out of town, on line etc.) for the above to be commercially viable unless run on a not for profit or volunteer basis, but do acknowledge it's difficult for those who would still prefer to shop in this way. Some towns deliver this offer through 'pop ups', (previously known as weekly markets), e.g. Tavistock Market has a weekly hardware stall, and a mobile bike repair service – both of which will be significantly cheaper to operate than paying rent, rates and utilities on renting a shop.

These residents believe the opportunity is to re-purpose the shops to offer more 'experiences' e.g. pottery café, escape room, art, cookery and floristry classes / events. Experiences cannot be bought online and Arundel has much potential to become a fabulous leisure destination with a great range of fun things to do and see for all ages.

There is a view there are too many coffee shops and tea rooms with a desire for a broader more contemporary food choice such as Thai, vegan, organic, street food choices, juice bar, healthy food. Some believe more high quality restaurants to help establish a 'foodie' reputation would be beneficial such as a decent restaurant on river, and in the Norfolk hotel. There is a lack of child friendly and young adult friendly places

to eat (with only Pizza Express and the Burger Shop fulfilling these roles respectively) and very limited outdoor 'al fresco' eating opportunities.

There is a feeling that the bars and pubs are all too similar, quite 'blokey' drinking establishments with a clear opportunity for more variety, e.g. gastro pub with fires, pub in Canada Rd, and women in particular want a wine bar with a little dancing. And a request for resident happy hours / loyalty schemes.

Clubs, community groups and facilities

Ideas for new clubs/activities included dancing (all ages all types), walking, running, cycling, swimming, netball, 5 aside, youth club/facilities, youth theatre/drama, music, cooking, knitting, croquet, arts and crafts, TED style talks, U3A, education.

There is a particular need for more activities for our youth and more facilities at Canada Road, as well as the need for community support groups such as young persons drop in centre, mixing pre-school with elderly, assisting elderly / lonely, Probus, and successful people mentoring.

In terms of facilities there is significant interest in a gym, and also in an indoor sports hall. Demand for a community centre with affordable café, Internet, social use, pop up event space and depending on location, a central visitor/information centre emerged. There is some support for this being in the Victoria Institute but equal support for selling the Institute to fund Lido gym /sports hall / a new community centre by those who think the Institute requires too much investment and lacks accessibility. Similarly with the library and it's valuable parking, there are some calls to keep it going and others for an alternative use, such as the community centre or a shared work space for commercial creative businesses.

Getting outdoors

Residents are interested in getting outdoors into the beautiful countryside that surrounds Arundel for their exercise, health and wellbeing (Over 50% of visitors come with a walk in mind). Arundel Park, the River Arun and the South Downs National Park (SDNP) are all acknowledged as wonderful assets that we are not currently optimising as a town.

Asks include clearly marked walking and cycling routes/trails all accessible from the station or town centre and supported by signs/maps/apps, as well as walking and cycling clubs, all to suit varying abilities. Events such as a weekly "parkrun", one-off bike races and family bike days were also requested.

A marketed 'package' of walking and cycling routes that started and/or ended in Arundel could also attract visitors as well as being used by residents. Some accommodation providers have seen an increase in these types of visitors during 2019. Residents are positive about this type of tourist and feel Arundel is missing businesses which provide walking and cycling tours, hire of bikes/e-bikes, boats, SUPs, kayaks etc, sale of outdoor clothing / kit and that the quay and moorings should be more secure and better maintained respectively to increase usage. They would like to see Arundel truly become a gateway to the Downs, and to work more closely with SDNP to develop access and trails from Arundel, and to promote our town.

Whilst out and about residents notice the changes to our landscape, e.g. dramatic cutting back of trees or Swanbourne Lake being empty, as well as day to day

maintenance needs. Some would like the town to work more closely with the guardians of our countryside (Norfolk Estates, SDNP etc.) for better communication of what’s happening and why, to understand the maintenance programmes, and to be able to discuss access, benches etc.

Visitors

90% of all daytime visitors to Arundel are from the UK. The majority are from the South East (Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset and South London) within a 90 minute drive or train journey, thereafter North London, M4 corridor, Oxford, Gloucester, Midlands and Scotland, and finally the rest of UK.

10% of visitors to Arundel are from overseas, and the majority arrives from the ‘near continent’ - France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium. They arrive through the gateway Ports (Dover to Portsmouth) in cars and camper vans. Thereafter international visitors tend to be from English speaking Commonwealth countries (Australia, New Zealand) and the USA, visiting Arundel as part of a longer trip.

90% of visitors arrive independently by car / camper van, 6% by train and 4% by organised coach tour. 65% of visitors are over 45 and only 16% are under 25, and 73% are in the ABC1 socio economic group. Overnight visitors are significantly more valuable to our economy, spending over 10 times per person than day visitors.

% visitors	From	Average length of visit	Average spend per person
66%	For day from home	5.7 hours	£8-12
22%	Stay overnight in Arundel	3.5 days	£30-£40 each night £105 - £140 per visit
12%	Staying nearby and visiting for day	5.7 hours	£8-£12

Our overnight visitors stay in a variety of accommodation types.

- B&B, guest house, pub 29%
- Hotel 28%
- Friends / relatives 15%
- Rented, self-catering 11%
- Camping 6%
- Touring caravan / camper van 4%

Arundel is well catered for with guesthouses and self-catering rentals, but there are gaps in terms of a high quality hotel, and appropriate facilities for camping/camper vans.

Key reasons for visiting

- Visiting pub/bar/café 60%
- Visiting a tourist attraction 48%
- A short walk (< 2 hours) 47%
- Simply relaxing and enjoying the scenery 42%
- Shopping 34%
- Attending an event 20%
- Visiting / meeting friends 16%
- A long walk (> 2 hours) 9% (survey was in town centre)

Best things about Arundel

- Castle 36%
- History and culture 26%
- Unspoilt scenery/ nature 20%
- Architecture / buildings 19%
- Lake / river 17%
- Quaint 15%
- Variety of places to eat and drink 12%
- Ambience 12%

About half of all daytime visits are to an Attraction, which individually drive significant footfall to Arundel, and many of the shops are quite dependent on this.

Together the key 6 Visitor Attractions drive around 350,000 visits a year (some will be the same individuals). Nearly 90% of these happen between April and October. Interestingly all these Attractions on which the town depends are charities / not for profit organisations, and most are not looking for additional footfall and therefore are unlikely to provide future growth.

	April- Oct	Nov - Mar
Castle	180	0
Cathedral*	?	?
Cricket	23	0
Lido	38	0
Museum**	7	2
Wetlands	65	35
	313	37

* The Cathedral does not track visitor numbers as has no ticket sales

** The Museum has another 40,000 non-ticket paying through door to visit the shop or visitor centre

The SDNP, Arundel Park, River and Swanbourne Lake also attract visitors from near and far for short and long walks, and again there will be a bias towards the summer months. There is a significant opportunity to make more of the walking and cycling potential of local walks as well as our location on established longer walks such as the South Downs Way, the Monarch's Way and the West Sussex Literary trail.

Arundel's independent restaurants and pubs are a strong pull in attracting locals from a 10-mile radius for lunch and evenings out, particularly later in the week and at weekends. The nighttime economy is driven by a different customer to the daytime and is less weather dependent and seasonal. Some are seeing a reduction in lunchtime in footfall.

Accommodation providers

Accommodation providers' views on the offer and how to drive footfall are driven by their conversations with paying guests, but also very consistent with residents.

On events a desire to improve the farmers market and hold other markets, more music events, dog friendly events, off season / all year round events, put more money into the Festival to make it really good, and pedestrianise during events. A broader town centre offer, and based on what their guests ask for this should include a launderette, bakery, outdoor clothing shop (walking/cycling), bike hire, bicycle repairs, boat hire,

swimming costumes, beauty products, more things for kids to do (especially when weather is not great), more independent shops and more variety in restaurants (Thai, fish, decent gastro pub).

Some points that were more specific to the accommodation providers included their top ask for the Castle to open all year round and on Mondays, and also a visitor centre in the middle of town (Norfolk Hotel constantly get walk ins) and for the Visit Arundel website to offer better functionality on booking accommodation – to be able to compare prices and facilities, to see availability and book directly on Visit Arundel website

Traders

Traders' views on driving footfall are also very aligned with those above.

There is a desire to see the town marketed as a whole and more widely than West Sussex. Whilst many will come for a free / cheap family day out the view is that when spending money on events and marketing we should focus on attracting visitors who will spend when they are here (more ABC1 visitors). There is energy around everything in Arundel being of a certain quality standard and Arundel standing for quality, heritage, Englishness, freshness, independents, being design led, craft etc., i.e. a clear brand positioning and a clear target market.

Once the footfall has arrived we need to 'encourage' it around more of town, especially areas like the top of the High Street, and behind the Co-Op. Having Castle visitors exit from the top gate is believed to be key to this.

In terms of events the Traders would like to see more smaller, quality events through the year, e.g. brocante / antiques, build on castle jousting, new season wine, classic cars, new menu launches, other markets. The Traders need to step up and organise some of these events themselves. They would like to see the Farmers Market revitalised with more variety of stalls, better quality and ideally open later in the day with quality busking / music. The sentiment of the shops is that the Festival does not drive trade and the money spent on expensive 'free street entertainment' elements would be better invested into a shorter 4-day event over the bank holiday weekend aimed at the ABC1 market.

There is general support for closing certain streets more frequently for special events to create safe shared spaces, car free areas, and al fresco dining/wining opportunities etc. There are concerns amongst some Tarrant Street shops about this being permanent or too frequent in Tarrant Street.

There is big support for a Town Manager to fulfil a liaison role between the Council and different business groups in town, and to support with event planning, development and communication. And finally, many businesses struggle to find staff so would support a central job board.

Professional services businesses

There are a surprising number of professional service individuals and businesses in Arundel, some of whom are extremely well regarded nationally within their profession. Some are in offices above shops or working from home in commercial creative industries such as marketing, film making, journalism, wellness retreats, and others are in the High Street such as solicitors, skin clinic, financial planners etc.

This group also attract visitors to town as their clients like visiting them in Arundel, many lunching and some even staying overnight. Having a train station with a London and Brighton commute is key to this.

With the right facilities, Arundel has an opportunity to attract more of these businesses to locate in town – providing interesting local jobs and driving the economy. As with other groups the parking and public transport improvements are high priorities. And then more uniquely to this group they need better broadband and digital connectivity, better quality office space, creative workstations / shared space / hub/ meeting spaces, more fresh, healthy food to go choices for lunch, better quality accommodation for business clients and networking support with similar professionals.

Making the most of our iconic buildings and facilities

A number of asks / needs for specific facilities have emerged including: -

- residents - community centre, gym, indoor sports hall, children's nursery, indoor / covered event space
- business - shared office space, artists' studios, better broadband, quality hotel
- visitors - all year round attractions, Visitor Centre, broader High Street offer, quality restaurant on the river, quality hotel and campsite / camper van facilities

Ideas on which buildings might suit these various needs included the Victoria Institute, Library, Lido, Town Hall, Nineveh Chapel, the Norfolk Centre, derelict barn, Waterside Café, the Militaria shop and warehouse space behind, Old Firehouse, Swanbourne Cafe etc. Concerns include if WSCC plan to shut the library, the cost of renovating the Victoria institute, and both it and the Lido each trying to raise £2m+ at the same time.

There was feedback on the presentation of certain properties needing maintenance, and a desire to hold landlords more accountable. This includes the idea of 'shop front standards' that business owners/landlords are encouraged to adhere to. The McColls window in particular was identified as being an eyesore and unhelpful to Arundel.

These buildings are owned by various private landlords or run by a group of trustees. Each has their own objectives, and act independently of each other, again making it somewhat difficult to directly influence.

External views

We have read a number of 'High Street' studies and attended a WSCC workshop which included a presentation by Ojay McDonald, the CEO of the Association of Town and City Management. During 2019, Nigel Lynn (ADC CEO) went on a study tour run by Bill Grimsey, author of a number of High Street reports, as well as attending other relevant conferences. The key insights emerging from these various external views are: -

Trends

- We have a nation of 'clone towns' (same brands on every High Street) which are now losing out to the on-line equivalent
- Footfall in town centres is down and continuing to decline each year
- Late 20th century retail was oriented around the car whereas 21st century retail will orient itself around the smart phone
- In 10-20 years, cash will have disappeared as will till operations and High Street banks
- Cars will be robotic / self-driving and less likely to be owned
- Future towns need to be digitally connected

Saving our High Streets requires us to consider: -

- Leadership and collaboration
- A co-ordinated marketing approach
- A 20 year plan – master planning
- Make towns fun and full of unique experiences
- Events and festivals are key to success
- Need to differentiate - individuality, character, local, creativity
- Community / family hubs, not retail hubs
- Culture and art lift the community spirit
- Sustainability becoming more important to citizens
- Technology – digital support with free Wi-Fi

OPPORTUNITIES

Emerging opportunities on developing the town offer to drive footfall

Based on all the above insights four potential projects emerge to further develop the Arundel offer to drive more footfall. Three focus on the town centre offer itself and one on leveraging the wonderful surroundings in which Arundel sits.

- a) Economic Growth Strategy
- b) All year round events
- c) Making the most of our iconic buildings
- d) Gateway to the SDNP and Arun Valley

3) Develop and implement an Economic Growth Strategy

Our footfall and spend is driven by the sum of all the individual offers of many private businesses and is therefore difficult to directly influence. Actions that could make a difference include: -

Develop an Economic Growth Strategy

- Identify target market visitors and businesses
- Be clear on key resident asks
- Define the Arundel 'brand' positioning
 - what Arundel stands for and how it differentiates itself
- Identify gaps and opportunities to drive footfall and spend which align with the brand positioning
 - Shops, restaurants, pubs, markets
 - Events, festivals, experiences, temporary pedestrianisation
 - Town centre trails – history, architecture, nature
 - Walking and cycling routes in and out of the South Downs and Arun Valley
 - Outdoor activities and related businesses
 - High end hotel and camping / camper van site with facilities
 - Modern, shared office space, quality meeting space, better broad band,
 - Coach and travel companies to add Arundel and/ or stay longer when here

There are a number of marketing consultants and branding experts living in Arundel who have the skills to work together and engage further with Arundel businesses and ADC to deliver this.

Implement the strategy

- Recruit Arundel Town Manager, who is then responsible for
- Review and re-launch business forums
 - Encourage Traders to set up a Traders Association with a narrower brief than Chamber of Commerce, to work on a joined up 'High Street' offer
 - And same for Accommodation providers. Attractions have already decided to meet regularly
 - Consider options similar to a 'scaled down' or informal BID
- Share Economic Growth Strategy with key stakeholders
 - Traders, Accommodation providers, Attractions, Landlords, and the business forums to inform their own thinking and decision making
- Work to influence the above and attract the desired businesses into Arundel
- Identify and apply for funding initiatives which align with the strategy

Whilst we can probably encourage professional residents to do the strategic thinking piece, we believe investing in a Town Manager would be critical to being able to influence and implement it. Recruiting someone with relevant experience is key. ADC fund the Littlehampton and Bognor Town Managers 50/50, and they work together, share learning and get support from ADC. Arundel could consider this approach.

4) Year round events

Make it easier for volunteers and committees to put on events

- Work with ADC to create an events framework and policies
 - to cover health and safety, road closures, temporary pedestrianisation, insurance. licences etc.
- Recruit the Town Manager to drive above and provide on-going support

Improve existing events

- Re-invigorate Markets by moving Farmers Market to ATC and implementing the review recommendations plus run additional, varied markets
- Support new Festival committee to implement 2019 review recommendations
- Support Candlelight 2020 when they build their plans
- Work with Castle to expand their biggest footfall events into the Town Centre

Develop all year round programme of varied events

- Build week by week year planner and process
- Benchmark other towns for learnings and ideas
- Encourage Traders, Attractions, Clubs and Community groups, residents etc. to work together to develop and add new events
- Link with Communications team to ensure all events are well communicated

Whilst not directly responsible for any individual event the Town Manager role is the central lynch pin to building, optimising and communicating the events programme.

5) Making more of our iconic buildings

Create a Property Working Group and build a plan for key buildings to meet community needs

- Ask the owners/ landlords / trustees of our key buildings to form a group
 - work with the input from residents to match the various 'needs' identified with key properties around town to create a long-term strategic plan.
- Match key buildings with the Town 'needs' to create an 'ideal use' for each,
- Share this plan for the 'ideal use' of each building with the relevant landlords
 - to attempt to influence their decisions over time
 - identify some immediate opportunities, as well as providing a long-term strategic direction to move to over time

Fund raising

- Work together to prioritise projects, and drive applications for grants to develop these key buildings
-

Rest of the town centre property portfolio

- The group could also work with the Town Manager to build a database of all the various shop landlords in town and then share with landlords: -
 - the Economic Growth Strategy, with a view to informing their own decision making over time, and encouraging them to contract with the types of tenants / businesses that support this offer and improve value for all
 - 'target standards' for the look of shop fronts, e.g. how they are maintained, use of lit/neon signs, no chains, that landlords would be encouraged to adhere to, and even include in their tenant contracts, in order to maintain an attractive, quirky High Street

6) Truly make Arundel a gateway to the SDNP and Arun Valley

The SDNP and River Arun are seen as extraordinary natural assets that are not being optimised by the town. This opportunity is to work with the relevant authorities and companies (e.g. SDNPA, Southern Rail, Littlehampton Harbour) to develop the infrastructure and assets to enable us to make more of them for both residents and visitors. A council sponsored working group led by interested volunteers would likely drive this.

Truly make Arundel a gateway to the SDNP and the Arun Valley

- Identify, and where needed develop, footpaths and cycle paths for mountain bikes and road bikes to make it possible to get from the town centre /station
 - to Pulborough via Amberley, and down to Littlehampton
 - into the SDNP at Whiteways through the Norfolk Estate
 - into the SDNP via the villages (S.Stoke, Burpham, Warningcamp and Wepham)
- Create affordable convenient places to moor at Littlehampton, Ford, Arundel, Black Rabbit, Amberley, Pulborough and Stopham Bridge to encourage more river day trips and activities
- Invest in signage and create a 'piste map/app' of above and market to visitors and residents

Work to make Arundel a stop over on the big established routes

- Work with holiday / tour companies, SDNP etc. to ensure Arundel gets tourists from the South Downs Way, The Monarch's Way, The Literary Trail

Attracting related businesses (such as bike and boat hire, walking tour companies etc.) to town would then be driven by the Economic Growth Strategy

COMMUNICATING WITH RESIDENTS AND MARKETING TO VISITORS

Communication has emerged as one of the biggest challenges in Arundel both 'internally' with our selves, and externally to our potential visitors.

Resident communication

Residents feel the need for a comprehensive, 'one version of the truth' place to find out what's going on and what they need to know. They want this to include news from event organisers, clubs and societies, ATC council, Castle / Norfolks / Estates, job vacancies, volunteering opportunities, and town information like bin days, road closures, consultations, facilities, local tradesmen and professional services etc. A place that just states the facts accurately and is not become a platform for fake news or individual opinions.

Similarly event managers, clubs etc. that want to communicate with town find it difficult. They use various marketing channels such as posters, leaflets, town Facebook sites, the Bell and their own websites and leaflets, but can struggle to get cut through. Arundel Town Council and the Castle/Norfolk Estates tend generally not to communicate as much as residents would like.

There are a number of resident communication channels established in Arundel including: -

- Visit Arundel website - mainly for visitors but also has information for locals
- The Bell, a quarterly door dropped magazine for residents
- Arundel Community Network email database now up to circa 580 members
- various Facebook sites (albeit few Instagram sites which the younger generations are more likely to use)
- various poster and noticeboard sites around town – on the street, inside club buildings and shop windows

Some of these channels are commercial operations, raising funds via advertising revenue to cover their costs. Others are entirely run by volunteers. Each has different owners and generally publish / print/ push the things they are asked to. Talking to the owners reveals the biggest challenge is not publishing the desired information but capturing, collating, editing it, and keeping it up to date.

Businesses and the various other groups and organisations in town are also keen to improve communication. They have additional needs to residents, for example knowing the events programme months in advance so they can plan their own staffing and adapt their own promotional plans.

Marketing to visitors

There is hardly any marketing of Arundel as a 'total' destination, e.g. national media advertising, attendance at Tourism trade fairs etc. All the groups feel that Arundel should be marketed to potential visitors.

The Visit Arundel website provides an important information service and consistently ranks no.1 in google searches on Arundel. This is a commercial operation, albeit only

seeks to cover its costs (which include providing a small number of jobs for local people) through advertising revenue, rather than make 'profit'.

We worked with the Visit Arundel team and AKIN to benchmark the site against other tourist town websites, and the learning's are being incorporated into a planned 2020 re-launch. The key issue currently is the dependency on advertising revenue which impacts significantly on the user experience and distracts from the key messages about Arundel. This also leads it to have adverts more relevant for locals, which further dilutes the clarity of message for visitors.

Our benchmarking reveals that many tourist towns have 2 sites, 1 for residents and 1 for visitors, some are funded and run by the council, and others by the Chamber of Commerce and/or BID schemes. Funded ones have less reliance on advertising, which allows them to focus on selling the destination and the reasons to visit and stay.

The Arundel Visitor Attractions are individually active in marketing to drive their own visits. All use a mix of: -

- *owned media* such as own website, Facebook site, social media, email newsletter
- *local paid media* such as brochures / leaflets, publications such as Sussex Life or the Bell, Visit Arundel.org, the Festival brochure and local PR
- *regional paid media* (widest is the Castle at 90 minute drive time) such as Spirit FM radio and PR, and regional magazines such as Women's Institute, The Leaflet Exchange, Coach Drivers Club, Primary Times (school children). There are also direct relationships with regional special interest groups like the WI and U3A for planned coach trips.

Currently there is no 'paid for' national or international marketing except for the Castle, which occasionally runs editorial ads in national special interest magazines and directories (gardening, historic houses etc.), and PR, e.g. BBC weather during Tulip festival. None of the Attractions attend trade/travel shows and exhibitions as they are too time consuming and expensive to do alone.

As a result of this project the Attractions have decided to meet regularly and agree opportunities to join up their marketing. However, their view is this would be best done as part of a 'total Arundel' marketing effort rather than just themselves.

And finally individual shops, restaurants, pubs etc. also use their owned media (website, Facebook, email newsletters) and local and regional advertising.

There is some crossover between what would be communicated to residents, and marketed externally, and the marketing skills needed are similar and so we advocate a joined-up approach. There are a number of actions to consider which could improve resident communication, and to promote and market Arundel to our target audiences

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunity is to create a Resident communication and Arundel marketing 'team'.

Create 2 separate but connected communication brands

Confirm Visit Arundel to focus purely on visitor marketing, set up a new resident /business communication brand such as 'Our Arundel', and create appropriate brand guidelines (logo, look & feel, tone of voice) for each.

Establish 'news flows' in

Establish processes to receive the various news, events etc by week from:-

- Town Manager who would share the events plan and be the link to the Attractions, Traders and Accommodation providers
- Council(s) for updates on consultations, road closures, planning issues etc
- 'Norfolks' for news from the Estates, Norfolk family and Castle
- Schools, Churches, Clubs, Societies and other Community groups including updating details annually at the ATC Community Fayre

Establish owned media channels for each brand

Decide which owned media channels each is going to use, and work with existing channel owners (such as Visit Arundel website, the Bell, ACN email, and Arundel Sussex fb site) to decide whether to align /merge with them

Owned Media Channel	Residents / Workers / Businesses 'Our Arundel'	Visitors 'Visit Arundel'
Website	OurArundel.co.uk	VisitArundel.co.uk
Social media	Facebook & Instagram	Facebook & Instagram
Email	Evolve ACN	Build visitor database
Outdoor	Posters and notice boards in town	Poster sites along A27
Print / direct mail	Quarterly magazine	Annual brochure
	Monthly leaflet	Map / leaflet

Develop a Commercial Operating Model

Understand existing advertising incomes and the costs of the various current operations, and any existing tool/systems/platforms, which could be used.

Build a commercial forecast of potential revenue, operational costs and resource costs to understand if an Arundel Communication and Marketing team could cover its costs and even potentially afford to do paid media (PR, advertising etc.) OR if it's more likely to need some type of public funding.

There are a number of Marketing and Branding professionals who could work with existing owners to understand the options for moving forward. The priority projects would be the re-launch of the Visit Arundel website, and the launch of a separate resident focused website both of which will require some one-off capital investment.

LEADERSHIP

At the various town meetings there was an overall sense that there is a 'leadership void' in Arundel. There is no clear "Agenda for Arundel" and people don't understand how things work between the Member of Parliament, County Council, District or Town Council. It is not obvious who does what or whom is taking a leadership role for Arundel.

Individual leadership groups

There are very high expectations of ATC some of which may relate to when it was a borough council. Indeed ATC is 'blamed' by residents for many things that WSCC and ADC are accountable for. So the role of ATC is misunderstood and many are even unaware that councillors are unpaid volunteers. That said there are plenty of examples of other Town Councils taking a much more proactive and assertive role, which is what Arundel's residents and businesses would like to see.

ATC's current approach to communication is not getting sufficient cut through. It needs to be seen to be listening more actively, and representing Arundel's interests more energetically to help the town prosper. The current flood defence work is an example of success but it is unlikely that the majority of residents understand the level of cross governance cooperation was required to achieve this important investment.

ADC is seen by some to be focused on Littlehampton and Bognor Regis. The challenges facing Arundel are not the same as coastal towns. There is a feeling that policies developed with Bognor and Littlehampton in mind are not always optimum for Arundel which, perhaps, has more in common with other towns in the Downs such as Steyning, Petworth and Chichester yet there is no process to collaborate or benefit from learning's there.

The Arundel 'Chamber of Commerce' has struggled recently and is currently reviewing its role. It's a broad spectrum of business sectors members can join from driving a view that it should focus on common business enablers such as recruitment, accounting, training, tax, social media etc. There are concerns that it's not affiliated with the British Chambers of Commerce and so members are not getting access to the expertise, content and benefits that it offers. Attendees at our separate various business meetings found they got more out of discussions with their 'fellow' businesses and felt there was more potential to proactively work together on projects, events and marketing campaigns in those smaller forums.

Residents and businesses would also like the Norfolks / Castle / Estates to be more visible, approachable and to play a bigger role in town as part of the community.

Opportunity

Residents and businesses would like Arundel's various stakeholder groups (ATC, CofC, Norfolks) to work collaboratively together and with others (ADC, WSCC, SDNP etc.) to drive change, work together where there are common objectives, and acquire grants and funding.

This Arundel Community Plan provides an agenda for Arundel that has come from residents. It cannot be achieved without joined up representation and effort. It offers a unique opportunity for key leadership groups to cooperate with renewed enthusiasm and champion Arundel with common cause.

THE END