

Workshop notes

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## The story behind the Sandstone Way

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### What is the Sandstone Way?

It's a high quality 120 mile/192 Km (approx.) mountain biking route following the sandstone ridge in North Northumberland between Berwick upon Tweed and Hexham.

It caters for the differing type of cycle tourist; end to end it's a good 3 day cycle route, but can be tackled in bite size sections (1 day or less). There are plans to develop a 2 day (weekend) version.

It follows the existing rights of way network of varying surface and widths and links in to 5 main Market Towns along its route, providing accommodation, tearooms and other services at regular intervals. 60% of the route is off-road and the other 40% is on road but on relatively quiet roads with tarmacked surfaces.

### When was it created?

It took 6 years to develop, of which 5 years were spent trying to secure grant funding. It opened formally in 2015.

### **How much did it cost to create?**

£50,000; £32,000 was grant funds and £18,000 was Volunteer time (ie Ted!).

### **How was it marketed?**

Developed a website [www.sandstoneway.co.uk](http://www.sandstoneway.co.uk)

The website has been viewed by future visitors from 23 Countries.

They contacted all the key Mountain Biking Magazines who sent riders out to test and review the route.

It was developed and marketed by Ted using his 'Dynamic's of Cycle Tourism' approach.

### **How many users have cycled it?**

In its first year (2015), they recorded 3,000 users which is a very successful start.

### **How will the route be maintained?**

The route so far has been very successful and from the website, they have already sold 3,500 maps, which generated an income of £8,000 which will be put back in to maintaining the route and its infrastructure. Other income generating measures will be developed, including donations, sale of memorabilia (eg; T-shirts etc).

### **What are the local economic benefits?**

Adding this route to the local tourism offer, has strengthened staying visitor numbers and has helped create new jobs. For example in Rothbury, a local tearoom owner had an increase in customers who were cycling the Sandstone Way; her income increased from £75K to £80K in 2015 and she took on new staff to help expand her business.

### **What is the secret to developing a successful route?**

*"The fact is walking and cycling tourism seems to be such a simple concept but over many years studying what works all over Europe, I came to realise it's like a gâteau – unless the right ingredients are there at the right time in the right quantities, mixed in the right way and then prepared in the right way then you don't get much of a gâteau."* Ted Liddle