



For immediate release

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Leaflet and tours help cater for Downton demand in West Oxfordshire

Tours and a leaflet showing filming locations in West Oxfordshire of television drama Downton Abbey have been developed by the District Council to tap into the demand from overseas visitors.

The Council's tourism service has worked with tour operator International Friends, which specialises in organising trips for overseas visitors, to introduce 'Downton Abbey' guided tours.

Tours are for small groups and will take visitors to Bampton, the scene of 'Downton village' used in all four series of the hit programme. Visitors will also be taken to other areas of the District, including Cogges, Witney, The Swan Inn at Swinbrook and The Old Forge, at Shilton, which have been used for filming, as well as local landmarks such as Blenheim Palace.

A leaflet with film locations and information about the local area has been produced by the Council as part of the project and a designated 'Downton Abbey' page launched on its Oxfordshire Cotswolds website, www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org/downton, which promotes West Oxfordshire to visitors.

The tours and leaflet are part of the Council's work to encourage tourism in West Oxfordshire and support local tourism businesses and the economy as a whole.

Cllr Richard Langridge, Cabinet Member with responsibility for tourism and local economy, said: "It's hardly surprising, given its beautiful setting and scenery, that West Oxfordshire is often chosen as a film location and the success of Downton Abbey has really put the spotlight on the area.

"We are proud to not only support our tourism industry, but also work actively to encourage its growth and ensure West Oxfordshire is a must-see destination for people from across the world. By working with an experienced tour operator, we are tapping into a growing demand from overseas visitors and this is good news for the District."



The fourth series of Downton Abbey has recently premiered in the US with a record 10.2 million viewers. The programme has also aired in China and Japan in the last 18 months.

The guided tours will be for small groups, up to 16 people, starting March. In Bampton, visitors will get to see:

- Churchgate House, used as the Crawley family home
- The old Grammar School building - 'Downton' hospital.

- St Mary's Church, renamed as St Michael and All Angels, the set of various Downton weddings, funerals and christenings.
- Church View, which has appeared regularly throughout all four of the programme's series and is home to two fictional pubs - The Grantham Arms and The Dog & Duck - as well as being the site of Downton Fair.

Jimmy Greene, Director of International Friends, said: "It's been fantastic working with the team at Oxfordshire Cotswolds to launch a selection of Downton Abbey themed day trips and overnight tours. From day one the interest from trade and consumers has been exceptionally high, particularly from North America."

Cllr Pauline Smith, of Bampton Parish Council, said: "We love having the Downton cast here and welcome this initiative by West Oxfordshire. It will enable us to share our lovely village and we look forward to welcoming new visitors. Although we no longer have the 13 pubs there were when Downton is set, we hope these tours will enable us to offer a traditional Cotswold hospitality."

To view the Downton film locations leaflet and find out more about the Council's tourism work see www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org. Alternatively, call 01993 861000.

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Notes to editors

Attached photographs show West Oxfordshire District Council tourism development officer Chris Jackson outside St Mary's Church, Bampton, one of the film locations for Downton Abbey.

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