

## Template for case studies

<b>Organisation (English)</b>	Belvedere House Gardens and Park
Organisation (in original language)	
<b>Contact details</b>	Bartle D'Arcy
Full Name	
Job title	General Manager
Address details	Belvedere House Gardens and Park Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ireland
Business Tel	00353 (0) 44 93 49060
Mobile Tel	00353 (0) 87 2917067
Fax	00353 (0) 44 93 49002
Email	Info@belvedere-house.ie
Web page address	www.belvedere-house.ie
Legal Status of organisation	<b>Public ownership</b>
Title of the Institution / Project in English	Belvedere House Gardens and Park
Title of the Institution / Project in Original Language	
Summary of Case study/project	The restoration and development of a Georgian example of Cultural Built Heritage set within a natural environment of 160 acres with a Victorian Walled Garden. An unique house built in 1740 and lived in until 1988 , purchased by Westmeath County Council in 1982.
Organisations Concerned	Westmeath County Council. Failte Ireland. Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Fund
Case study/Project detailed description	Belvedere House Gardens and Park is today a multifaceted leisure attraction set within one of Irelands most important Heritage sites with emphasis on Educational activities and targeted towards a Family Market both domestically and abroad.  Developing the different aspects of Cultural Tourism

	<p>is one of the main aims of the estate with new Historical Galleries currently being completed and educational programmes centring on the natural environment being developed. This is done through our new horticultural additions such as our Apiary and our Falconry Centre. We are open year round with a varied Calendar of events and had 100,000 visitors last year.</p>
<p>Case study/Project detailed description cont....</p>	
<p>Outputs</p>	



### *1. Executive Summary*

Belvedere House Gardens & Park is a multifaceted Visitor Attraction on the shores of Lough Ennell, near Mullingar Co. Westmeath. The estate encompasses many elements including Georgian Villa of 1740, Victorian Walled Garden with Glasshouses and pottage, several celebrated follies, including the Jealous Wall, Falconry Centre, Café, Gift Shop, Animal Sanctuary, three Children's Playgrounds and interpretative centre, all set within 160 acres of majestic parkland. Belvedere is open year round, with a wide calendar of events, it also provides for social and corporate functions, ranging from birthday parties to international conferences. Belvedere as a tourist attraction is a lively and vibrant place to visit, it is a place where individuals & families feel comfortable and where there are many opportunities for informal and formal enjoyment. Rarely does any attraction offer such scope for active and passive enjoyment of the environment.

Westmeath County Council, purchased the property in 1982, and wholly owns the estate. A £5.72 million investment in restoration and development of the estate was completed in April 2000; Belvedere is Westmeath County Council's millennium project. The restoration was funded by £4 million grant aid from European Regional Development Funding, through Bord Fáilte & The Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Fund, with the remainder being provided by the County Council, from its own resources. Belvedere is quite a unique project for a County Council, and one which remains closely monitored by the Council, Elected Representatives, and of course the people of Westmeath.

## 2. Mission Statement

Westmeath County Council had been actively considering the most appropriate form of sustainable tourism development in the county, therefore its Mission Statement for Belvedere is:

*“To create a tourist attraction which will make a significant contribution to the strategic development of tourism in the Midland’s East Region”*

As Belvedere has already fulfilling this mission, a new mission statement could be:

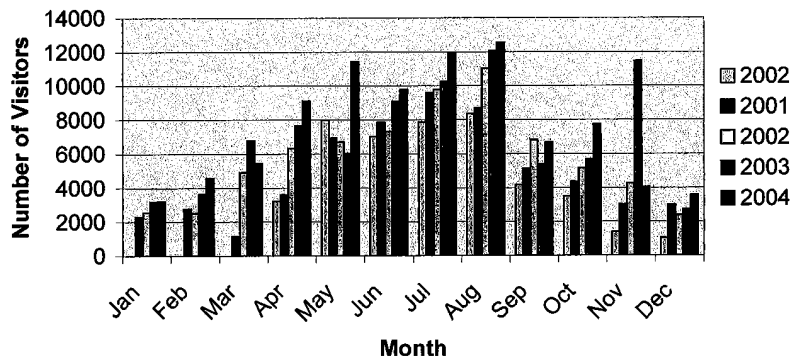
*“Belvedere to be a tourist attraction that is a lively and vibrant place to visit, a place where individuals & families feel comfortable, safe and where there are many opportunities for informal and formal enjoyment.”*

## 3. Situation Analysis

In its first year of operation Belvedere exceeded its 2000 target of visitors by 18%, with over 32,000 visitors through the gates. Since then progress has been very positive, with visitor numbers Belvedere rising (See Chart 1) 10% to 20% year on year, and is now attracting over 100,000 visitors per year (projected 2005 figure). These visitor numbers place Belvedere firmly in the top 5% of Irish House Castle & Garden Attractions in Ireland. Belvedere’s income is rising in tandem with its visitor figures, although the net spend per visitor needs to be rise considerably.

Belvedere House Gardens & Park is doing many things right, including its wide appeal to people of all nationalities, ages, demographics and social backgrounds. This appeal is based upon it variety of elements from playgrounds to Georgian Villa, and Falconry Centre.

**Chart 1 - Belvedere Visitor Numbers 2004**



One of the major treats to Belvedere's success is something, which is completely outside of human control and that is the Irish weather. The weather does not affect overseas visitors to Ireland (6.4 million in 2004: Fáilte Ireland), but it does have a detrimental effect on the domestic market, which was calculated as being 7million in 2004 (Fáilte Ireland).

### **3.1 Market Summary**

Belvedere House Gardens & Park has been marketed as a package. But from customer surveys it has been show that the reasons for visiting Belvedere are listed as follows:

1. **The Package** -The combined elements and variety of Belvedere made it attractive to visit.
2. **Belvedere House**
3. **Gardens & Parkland**
4. **Children's Play areas**
5. **Falconry Centre**
6. **Events**
7. **Other reasons incl: location, price, opening hour, animals etc**

The majority 86% of Belvedere's Visitors are from the domestic market, these are made up of:

- ❖ **Families**
- ❖ **Individual visitors (Friends, partners etc)**
- ❖ **Senior citizens**
- ❖ **Students (College-Schools etc)**

The above related to visitors on site, however in term of income, the elements, which produce most income per head, are as follows;

- ❖ **Events – Halloween, Narnia Christmas, Open Air Theatre, etc**
- ❖ **Conferences**
- ❖ **Party Nights etc**

#### **3.1.1 Market Demographics**

Visitors to Belvedere House Gardens & Park are from every conceivable demographic, geographical and psychographic segmentation, due in no large part to the variety of elements available in Belvedere. This is of course advantageous to Belvedere in term of visitors, however it does make developing a correct marketing mix very difficult, necessitating a certain amount of generic marketing taking place.

#### **3.1.2 PEST Analysis**

##### **Political**

Belvedere House Gardens & Park, is wholly owned by Westmeath County Council. This can have a two fold effect, as Belvedere is owned by a Local Authority, it is bound by legal constraints and framework placed on all local authorities. For instance no local authority can set up a 'business', which is seen to in direct opposition to a local business, it cannot duplicate any business. These constants, are understandable, due to the financial backing that the council can give to a business, however it very

much restricts some avenues of income for Belvedere. The management of Belvedere has to answer to a Council Based committee, the Council itself, its Elected Members and of course the people of Westmeath.

One other major drawback of being owned by a local authority is that Belvedere pays V.A.T on all its purchases, services etc, it can not however claim back any of that V.A.T as an ordinary company can.

On the positive side, the council purchased an amazing estate, which might otherwise have been bought privately, and the general public excluded from it. The Local Authority is totally committed to the advancement of Belvedere, and recognise its importance to the locality, Westmeath and the Nation, it therefore subsidises Belvedere on an ongoing basis. I would also add that the ownership of Belvedere has ensured that even with the new road development of the N6 & N4 & N52, Belvedere along with other Visitor Attractions will be well sign posted off these new super highways, which would otherwise have transported visitors straight through Westmeath and on to Galway etc.

Of course any lobbying on behalf of HFI or RAI, Westmeath Tourism etc all have a knock on beneficial effect for Belvedere.

#### *Economic*

The recent economic boom in Ireland has had a number of effects:

- ☞ Soaring house prices has meant that many people have more or less discretionary income.
- ☞ Many people have moved from large centres of population, into more rural settings, hence the steep rise in population within the catchment of Belvedere.

#### *Social*

- ☞ Many parents see very little of their children mid – week, meaning that they tend to want to spend more quality time with them at the weekends, and Belvedere provided the ideal location.
- ☞ Healthier lifestyles are encouraging people to walk and take exercise.
- ☞ Many people feel unsafe walking in town and rural areas, Belvedere provides and a safe environment for all gender, ages, individual & families.
- ☞ People travel and holiday more, this can have two effects; 1. They leave Ireland and travel abroad, but in doing so come back with heightened expectations of what they want. 2. When they travel within Ireland, they are more likely to visit attractions, especially those that are open out of peak season, which Belvedere is.

#### *Technological*

- ☞ Technology changes so rapidly, that interpretative systems etc, become dated very quickly.
- ☞ People, especially children have heightened expectation of special effect etc for every thing.
- ☞ The Internet is ever changing, it is very difficult to keep a website fresh and constantly 'new'. It is also very expensive to do so. Yet larger quantities of brochures are needed!

### 3.1.3 Competitor Analysis

Belvedere does not have competitors as such, as there are no similar attractions in this area, however nationally those attractions which would rival Belvedere in terms of visitor number are Irish National Stud & Japanese Gardens, Powerscourt & Kylemore Abbey. These attractions are all quite different, but elements that they do well are:

- ☞ Powerscourt is shopping heaven. Its location. It is very well established & recognised.
- ☞ Irish National Stud & Japanese Gardens have now opened the new St Fiachra's gardens. – Its location is excellent – very well established & recognised.
- ☞ The natural beauty of Kylemore setting, although remote is in the heart of tourism in the west.

All of the above are very well established and are on the Coach Tour routes, which will increase visitor numbers, but which will not necessarily help income levels. As coach tours are not high spend visitors, they have limited time at each site and are high maintenance when on site.

### 3.2. SWOT Analysis

#### Strengths:

- ☞ Central Location in midlands
- ☞ Variety of Elements on site; House, Gardens, Parkland, Falconry centre etc.
- ☞ Wide appeal to all ages.
- ☞ Very competitive rates.
- ☞ Setting – lakeshore etc.
- ☞ Events, year round & variety.
- ☞ Open All year Round

#### Weaknesses:

- ☞ Location: Westmeath was not traditionally perceived as a tourism destination.
- ☞ Local Government constraints on Belvedere as a business – Not be opposition to any other business in area, bar/dance licence etc.
- ☞ Rely heavily on events for income generation.
- ☞ Aged website.

#### Opportunities:

- ☞ Upgrade of N4 & N6 – bring people to the midlands faster than ever before. New directional signs to Belvedere.
- ☞ 6.5 Million foreign/overseas tourist to Ireland in 2004 (Fálite Ireland).
- ☞ 7 million domestic market.
- ☞ Ageing population with money & time to spend it.
- ☞ Healthier lifestyles – outdoors, walking etc.
- ☞ Lifestyle changes, working parents-quality time with children at weekends.
- ☞ 2 refurbished & 1 new hotel in area.

#### Threats:

- ☞ N4&N6&N52 upgrades – speed people through Westmeath on to destination of Dublin/Galway etc.
- ☞ Bird Flu – affecting movement of our Birds of Prey off site events, promotional work & education programme.
- ☞ Technology changing so quickly – interpretative centre quickly dated.
- ☞ Visitors have higher expectations, having been and seen many places at home and abroad.
- ☞ Not sustaining investment on an annual basis.

### ***3.3 Keys to Success & 3.4. Competitive Advantage/s***

- ☛ Belvedere currently enjoys a good customer satisfaction rating, as show by the height percentage of repeat visits.
- ☛ Belvedere continues to have considerable grow in visitor and income levels; this growth has been experienced year on year, despite general down turns nationally. However there is always room for improvement.
- ☛ Belvedere does many things right, not least of which is the excellent mix of attractions with the main attraction.
- ☛ Interesting & exciting events, on a year round basis, certainly put Belvedere firmly into the top 5 Visitor attractions.
- ☛ Year round opening, is also a huge advantage, especially in term of customer retention, and awareness levels. Belvedere is simply open when most places are not.
- ☛ Belvedere's admission rates are very competitive.
- ☛ Belvedere has a safe friendly environment for individuals & families of all ages.
- ☛ The majority of Belvedere's Staff has been here since opening in 2000, there are committed and for the most part very enthusiastic about Belvedere.
- ☛ Belvedere has two well-appointed conference rooms in a glorious setting.

### ***3.5 Critical Issues***

- ☛ Customer retention is vital, as its 'word of mouth' that is our greatest awareness tool.
- ☛ Belvedere has consistently high operational cost, with staffing & heating top of the expense list. Events are also costly to set up, especially to achieve the standards people expect.
- ☛ Belvedere is relatively new to the market, it is not a house hold name, but progress is being made in relation to this, especially through media coverage and constant placement on programmes like Winning Streak.
- ☛ Belvedere by its nature has been market as a unit, with many elements making up that unit, this can often leave fragmentation in the marketing.
- ☛ Most of Belvedere's staff has been since opening in 2000. Up-training is necessary, in order to keep them interested and informed.
- ☛ It is vitally important that Belvedere maintains it Heritage Site status and appearance, while at the same time being constantly refreshed.

### ***4.0. Marketing Strategy***

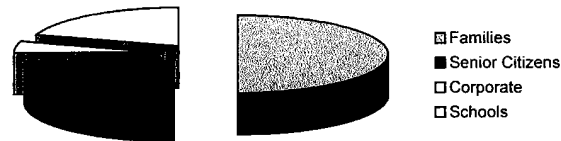
Belvedere has secured considerable domestic market share, it has appeal to all ages, genders & demographics. It needs to retain this market share and improve on it. it also needs to increase profit margins, while reducing expenditure.

#### ***4.1. Marketing Objectives***

1. Increase annual turnover by 15% by the end of 2006.
2. Increase Visitor numbers by 20% by end of 2006.
3. Increase Belvedere's Brand Awareness.

## 4.2. Target Market

### Belvedere Target Market



## 4.3. Positioning

### Families:

- Uniqueness of Belvedere
- Great value day out, very competitively priced.
- Lots of activities, full days entertainment in a safe and friendly environment.
- Year round opening.
- Children orientated events. Harry Potter, Yeti, Narnia, art & crafts etc.

### Senior Citizens:

- Uniqueness of Belvedere
- Great value day out, very competitively priced.
- Lots to do and see, in a safe and friendly environment.
- Open year round (When special rates available in hotels).
- Events – Open Air Theatre, Living History etc.

### Corporate:

- Central location.
- Competitive priced.
- Unique Corporate Packages: (Conference room hire, Meals, Falconry Experience, Tours, etc).

### Schools:

- Central Location.
- Year Round Opening.
- Unique Educational Packages (Historical, Natural, Wildlife etc)
- Safe & friendly environment.
- Very competitive rates.

## 5.0. Marketing Mix

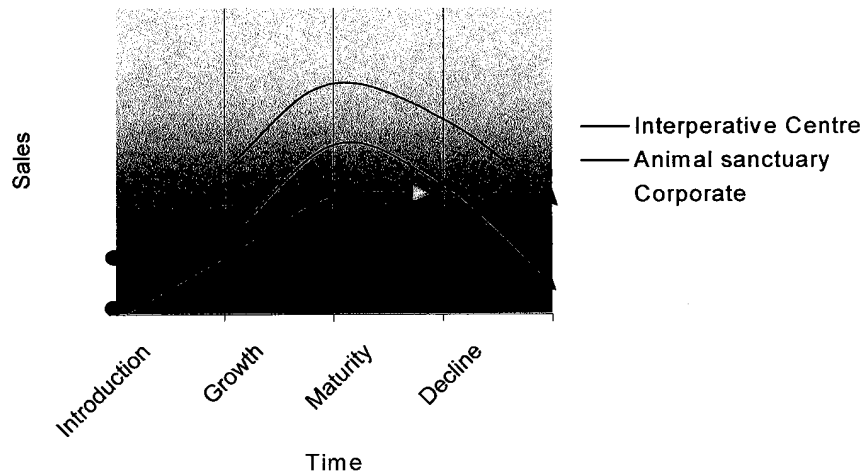
Belvedere has had a reasonably successful five years. It had initially depended upon its 'new broom to sweep clean' idea, but as visitors keep returning, Belvedere has developed a strategy of change and improvement to maintain interest. Events have been particularly popular, gaining media interest and publicity, also creating excellent

PR opportunities. Belvedere has successfully met and surpassed visitor expectations, in a unique safe environment.

### 5.1. Product Policy

- ➔ Belvedere is a safe friendly oasis in an often-difficult world.
- ➔ It is a place to provide a sense of adventure through its Events (Yeti, Narnia etc).
- ➔ Yet it maintains its unique and colourful history, reflecting a microcosm of Irish social history.
- ➔ The main focus of the estate, will always remain the House, Parkland, Gardens. However some elements of the original mix have become tired, namely the Interpretative Centre, which has become so quickly dated. The Animal Sanctuary has always been popular, but there are too many animals of the same type, namely ponies. To revitalise, different animals need to be sourced.
- ➔ The Corporate elements of Belvedere is only developing, with the opportunity to incorporate Falconry Displays and Experiences into the corporate mix, would certainly create a very unique corporate experience.

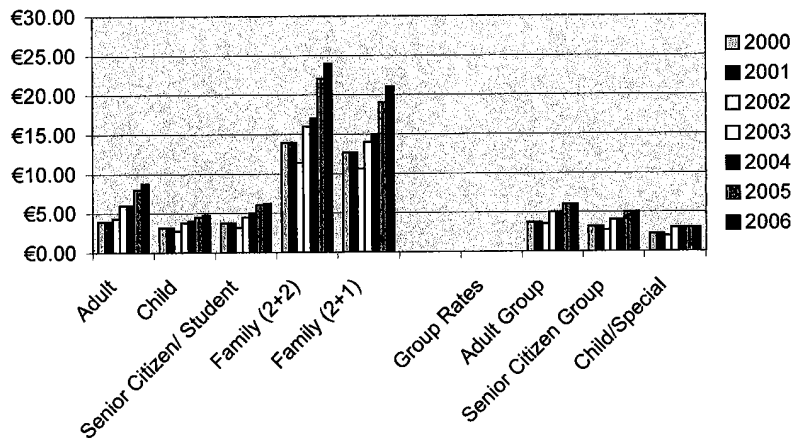
### Belvedere Product Life Cycles



### 5.2.Pricing Policy

Belvedere’s pricing policy has always been to provide the highest possible level of service and experience to the customers, at the most competitive rates possible. Due in no small way to the fact that Belvedere is owned by the people of Westmeath, through Westmeath County Council, so value for money is all important.

**Belvedere Admission Rates**



### 5.3 Promotion Policy

The ultimate promotional objective for Belvedere is increase profit margins. In order achieve this objective, there needs to be greater awareness of Belvedere and what it has to offer. Special emphasis will be on events. Belvedere marketing/promotional budget for 2005 was 4.9% of total spend, for 2006 the marketing budget will be extended to 5.2% of total spend (approx €60,000.00), this budget will be used through the medium of : -

- ☛ PR - has been hugely successful for Belvedere, it will be used as much as possible.
- ☛ Website & links
- ☛ Brochure distribution
- ☛ Full calendar of events
- ☛ Local & National Press
- ☛ Local & National Radio

- ☛ Exhibitions & Trade Shows
  - ☛ Holiday World
  - ☛ Over 55's Show
  - ☛ Education Show
  - ☛ Horse Show
  - ☛ Tullamore Show etc
  
- ☛ Membership of umbrella marketing organisations;
  - ☛ Fáilte Ireland
  - ☛ Heritage Island
  - ☛ Westmeath Tourism
  - ☛ Houses Castle & Gardens
  - ☛ Gardens of Meath
  - ☛ Ely O'Carroll
  - ☛
  
- ☛ Presentations e.g;
  - ☛ Gardening Clubs
  - ☛ Historical Societies
  - ☛ Schools
  
  - ☛ Newsletters and emailed
  - ☛ Mail shots
  
  - ☛ Sponsorship;
    - ☛ Belvedere sponsor a horse race on the Kilbeggan race track
    - ☛ Westmeath Senior Football Team, train at Belvedere
  - ☛ Local Athletics training & meetings Incl;
    - Leinster Cross Country Finals held at Belvedere
    - National Cross Country Held at Belvedere
    - Leinster, National School Cross Country Finals

#### **5.4. Product Policy**

Belvedere has a number of new events for 2006, (they can not all be listed until finalised). The 2006 events will include:

- ☛ June Bank Holiday Event(s)
- ☛ Living History
- ☛ Lecture series
- ☛ Flower arranging
- ☛ Bat Walks - Nature walks - Tree Walks - Dawn Chorus
- ☛ Open Air Theatre - Shakespeare
- ☛ Halloween & Yeti
- ☛ Christmas Events - Santa etc
- ☛ Fairs - Antique – Craft – Alternative Therapies

Some areas, which need review, are;

- ☛ Café - menu – opening etc
- ☛ Shop - opening hours & stock types & levels
- ☛ Tram - use - timing - staffing

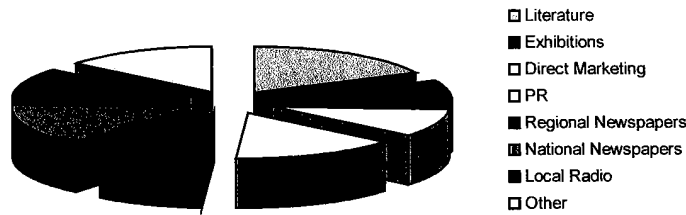
**5.5. Distribution Policy**

Belvedere will be making use of;

- Internet - Own Website and links - especially for information on events.
- Brochure Distribution will be by Glance Promotions and Direct Delivery to local hotels, B&Bs etc, also distributed through marketing groups.

**6.0 Marketing Budget**

**Marketing Budget**



**7.0. Tactical Plan**

<b>2006</b>	<b>Events:</b>	<b>Advertising /Promotion</b>
<b>January</b>	New Calendar of Events New Years resolutions - Membership promotion	Holiday World, Belfast, Dublin Mail shot 2006 Calendar of Events  Membership renewals: Failte Ireland Westmeath Tourism House Castles & Gardens Meath Gardens  Website updates
<b>February</b>	St Valentines Day	Website updates
<b>March</b>	St Patrick's Day	Website updates

<b><i>April</i></b>	Easter Week	National & Local Press adverts Easter
	Easter Bunny	Press releases
	Easter egg trails	National & Local Press adverts May Events
<b><i>May</i></b>		Press releases
		Website updates
	May Bank Holiday	Press Releases
	Bat Watch Weekend	Garden Heaven Show
	Living History	National & Local Press ads June Events
<b><i>June</i></b>		Press releases
		Website updates
	June Bank Holiday	Press Releases
	Special Event	National Game & Country Fair
	Living History	National & Local Press ads July Events
<b><i>July</i></b>		Press releases
		Website updates
	Open Air Shakespeare	Press Releases
	Living History	National & Local Press ads August Events
		Press releases
<b><i>August</i></b>		Website updates
		Press Releases
	Bank Holiday Weekend	Tullamore Show
	Proms in the Park	Dublin Horse Show
	Living History	Website updates
<b><i>September</i></b>		Press Releases
		National Ploughing Championships
	Back to School	National & Local Press ads Halloween Events
	Lecture Series	Press releases
		Website updates
<b><i>October</i></b>		Press Releases
	Halloween Events	National & Local Press adverts Halloween
	Trick or Treat Trails	Events
	Yeti	Membership renewals
	Lecture Series	Ely O'Carroll Tourism
	Cross Country	Website updates
	Championships	

		Advertise Craft Village Units for hire
<b>November</b>	Lecture Series National School Cross Country	Press Releases: Christmas Events Lecture Series Competitions  Website updates  2007 Events Calendar Production & Printing
<b>December</b>	Christmas Events Santa Ice Palace Lecture Series Party Nights  Shopping Nights Craft Village	National & Local Press ads Christmas & New Year Events/Opening Press releases  Website updates