

Runcorn & Widnes Tourism Business Network
9.30am Catalyst Science Discovery Centre
22nd February 2011

Present

Pat Audoire, Pete Bentham, Su Bullen, Calum Colquhoun, Paul Fernay, Steven Garnett, Meryl Jameson, Karen Jones, Tim Leather, Di Nowell, Jessica Rowles, Brian Povey, Claire Whitlow

Apologies

Gareth Brandwood, Kevin Burrows, John Doyle, Roger Maher, Claire McDade, Adam Munday, Stephen Rimmer, Irene Rutter

Welcome

- Claire Whitlow from 'Daresbury Dairy' introduced her new business to the group.
- Business will be producing ice cream from the dairy farm.
- Aiming to produce samples in March with a view to opening in April.
- It will just be Claire initially working in the shop but may possibly take on part time staff in the future.
- Interested to look at how she can work in partnership with the other businesses.
- Claire is also involved in the marketing work for the new Lewis Carroll Centre.

Business Update

- **De Vere** – December was good and the first quarter of 2011 has started very strong. Now planning towards Easter/April and May. Half- Term in particular was very busy. Currently looking at rebranding Sunday lunch offer.
- **Everglades** – Strong finish to 2010, January was up and February is currently looking good. Wedding season bookings not as good as 2010. Sunday lunch booking are up. Currently working on a number of planned events, will send through to SB.
- **Lewis Carroll** – Sound system has been enhanced. Some pews have been moved out to make room for the shop. Currently aiming to be open at some time in September/October. Separate website will be established for the centre which is currently being worked on, www.lewiscarrolcentre.co.uk
- **Brindley** – Panto went really well with increased performances. 65% capacity overall.
- Advanced sales not doing very well with people leaving booking till the last minute.
- HBC Marketing looking at marketing Halton cultural element more with attached website.
- PB believed that new website could work well alongside visithalton.com rather than duplicating some content.
- Brindley does not currently offer Boxing Day panto although CC believed that he could offer business to them if De Vere included it in their Christmas packages. PB to consider.
- **Halton Castle** – Nothing to report at the minute. PA retiring next month and will be replaced at TBN meetings by Nathan Renison.
- **Dianne Nowell** – Coach bookings are down although slide shows are becoming more popular again.
- **DC Leisure** – Membership is up with it being a new year. Planning to introduce 'Ket Fit' sessions (exercise with weights). Open weekend coming up in April. Pleased to have received first ever Tourism Awards nomination.
- **Catalyst** – December good. Trialled 'sleep over' event and looking to push this

more in the future. Business had its best January since 2006. 2 New exhibits in the museum.

- HBC has cut £35k grant so will face a challenge. Currently looking for sponsorship.
- **Holiday Inn** – January very good and February looking good. Positive compared to last year. Conferences don't seem to be doing very well, business appears to be cutting in this area. Short lead in times for bookings; customers keeping hold of money till the last minute.

TMP Round-Up

- TMP awards launched this week, will take place on 26th May at the ACC.
- Judging slightly different this year; panel will conduct 'mystery shop' themselves.
- Budget for TMP not yet finalised but Chief Exec not overly worried.
- Confex exhibition next week.
- www.liverpoolconventionbureau.com website will go live by the end of the week.
- Currently working with cluster groups across region.

Council Support For Visitor Economy

- Existing budget proposed to stay the same for next year. Need to consider what the budget is to be spent on. Ideas welcomed – send to TL & SB
- Like to remodel support slightly so we can be seen to help businesses grow more effectively.
- TL & SB to look at what money could be spent on.
- Venture Fields development well on schedule.
- Widnes Shopping Park doing very well.

Halton Business & Tourism Awards

- Friday 25th February, Holiday Inn, Runcorn.
- Disappointed at the number of nominations. Enough to shortlist but would have liked more. Quality of nominations very good.
- Should be using awards to promote tourism.
- Hopeful that awards will go ahead in 2012. TL felt it important that awards continue.
- Ticket sales down on previous years. Not as many people attending with nominees.
- Great Days Out Fair at Museum of Museums, Trafford Centre, 5th March. SB & SG attending. If businesses want any literature displaying, get in touch with either SB or SG and we can collect.
- New Eco Trail with electric bikes opening by Claymoore Narrowboats.

Election of New Chair

- Claire McDade leaving on 3rd March to take up a position with the National Gallery of Scotland.
- Norton Priory will not be reappointing immediately.
- TBN therefore needs a new chair. Not a big job, just needs to be a figurehead for the group.
- SB asked the group to think about it and get back to her if they were interested.

Next Meeting – May (possibly at the Brindley)