

St.Helens Tourism & Leisure Business Network
The World of Glass, Chalon Way East, St.Helens, WA10 1BX
Thursday 2nd December 2010

Present:

Lynn Ben-Yousef (Darkstar Laser)
Bev Fisher (Premier Inn North)
Ron Helsby (World of Glass)
Carolyn Peacock (Merseytravel)
Vivien Shew (Houghwood Golf)
Debbie Thompson (Saints)
John Whaling (St.Helens Council)
Jo Wight (St.Helens Council)

Erica Dillon (TMP)
Rob Gerrard (Ruskin Leisure)
Carolyn Houghton (TMP)
David Pugh (St.Helens Council)
Carly Shields (Premier Inn Liverpool Rainhill)
Trish Valentine (Houghwood Golf)
Dickon White (Haydock Park) Chair

Apologies were received from:

Kim Burrows (Thistle Haydock)
Peter Farrell (Ramada Encore)
Barrie Kelly (St.Helens Chamber)
Chantelle Nolan (Theatre Royal)
Peter Sandman (Merseytravel)

Edward Cross (Holiday Inn Haydock)
Cllr Barrie Grunewald (St.Helens Council)
Gary Maddock (St.Helens Council)
Edward Perry (Knowsley Estates)
Gavin Scott (Citadel Arts Centre)

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

DW chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the St.Helens Tourism & Leisure Business Network and gave thanks to the World of Glass for kindly hosting the meeting.

2. MINUTES / MATTERS ARISING

All previous actions were signed off:

DT confirmed that the new Saints Stadium will be open for business on 1st December 2011.

Saints have now announced bus and travel options to allow fans ease of transportation to Widnes on match days. Saints have teamed up with Arriva who, alongside their normal Widnes bus service, will provide a direct service from St.Helens town centre to the Stobart Stadium in Widnes.

This prepaid service will pick up and terminate at Hall Street in St.Helens with limited stops along the route – with the frequent service beginning three hours before kick-off and ending 45 minutes before kick-off. A special season ticket at £40 will be available to buy shortly from the Saints ticket office to travel on the bus.

The bus season ticket will also permit travel on any Arriva bus service from a journey start point within the borough on any scheduled service to Hall Street and return.

Saints have also teamed up with official transport provider Hattons Transport to provide an alternative service, which covers the Eccleston, Town Centre and Clock Face areas of St.Helens.

Events Promotion and Day Visitor Promotion

JW updated that a way forward has been agreed, whereby the HONW branding and www.visitsthelens.com would be used as the primary branding/call to action on all materials promoting externally focused events, to differentiate them from internally focused events.

3. TLBN DEPUTY CHAIR DISCUSSION

JW raised the subject of the need for two private sector TLBN Deputy Chairs, given the private sector focus of the network, to be available to deputise for the Chair in his absence.

EP and DT were nominated and agreed as Deputy Chairs. The rationale is that both sit on the LCR Visitor Economy Panel, while EP is also the Chair of Knowsley TBN, thus formalising even closer ties between the two. DT informed she was pleased to accept.

ACTION: DW to confirm with EP he is willing to be deputy Chair.

ACTION: DW to draw up Terms of Reference and circulate.

DW commented on the challenges faced by the TLBN as a result of the changes in regional tourism structures and asked JW to comment on the implications of the comprehensive spending review for the local tourism industry in terms of Council service provision and staff.

JW advised that on December 1st, St.Helens Council had announced a review of a number of posts across the Council, primarily those funded by central government "Area Based Grant". Regrettably Jo Wight, Gary Maddock and a number of the Economic Development teams posts are affected in this process and are now in redeployment consultation. JoW and GM will remain in post until at least 23rd February 2011 when the consultation period will end.

DW expressed his regret and grave concern, commenting on how all of the TLBN have benefited from the dedicated tourism staff and function/service provision, citing the excellent support Haydock Park has received, which has directly positively effected their botton line. DW commented that as the MD of Haydock Park and the Chair of the St.Helens TLBN, he would be writing to the CEO of the Council to express his concerns for the future development of the St.Helens TLBN and tourism sector.

LBY questioned if the Council were looking at options to carry on TLBN support which LBY added had been invaluable. JW advised that the posts are being cut, therefore it is uncertain what activities will continue.

A number of members expressed the fact that the potential lack of any dedicated staff or TIC made the ongoing maintenance of www.visitsthelens.com even more essential than ever.

DT added that the move seemed particularly shortsighted in light of the £25 million new Saints Stadium and expressed concern about the impact on the local visitor economy.

RH added that for the same reason, due to the lack of Area Based Grant funding, the TIC will cease to operate from 31st March 2011. This will affect the two TIC staff, Sue and Sheila who have been the customer facing side of tourism in the Borough. RH is looking at options to keep the TIC open as a leaflet drop visitor information point only.

DW asked that the TLBN members have a look at their individual areas of business and feed through any information to DW regarding support of the tourism function. DW added that all of the TLBN members have benefited in commercial pay back through the tourism funding streams that have been available.

ACTION: All to provide information ASAP to DW highlighting the positive support they have received from the tourism team and what their future concerns are re. the prospect of no dedicated local tourism staff or provision.

4. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

Dream

JW updated on *Dream* progress. The Legacy bid to increase visitor numbers and make *Dream* a much stronger destination/ experience has been successful. We have secured over £108,000 Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funding via NWDA and £80,000 from Forestry Commission Community Forests NW funding as part of a £208,000 project. This *Dream* Legacy Programme is intended to fund the following activity, all to be completed by end of March 2011:

- *Dream* illumination - ambient up-lighting (Planning application submitted on 9th November)
- Gateway enhancements - to the site entrance
- Access improvement - additional pathway improvements, additional wheelchair accessible gate, installation of seating and picnic facilities, visitor counter

- Tree management - to create sight lines enhancing the visibility of and from *Dream*
- Visitor research study

Audio Guides Ltd have been commissioned to devise and deliver a comprehensive digital interpretation and information scheme to tell the story of the colliery, the site, its ecology, and *Dream* itself.

This is intended to involve the installation of wi-fi hotspots in both the pub and onsite inside the sculpture plus the production by April 2011 of audioguides/trails • podcasts • oral history archive • "image hunters" children's trail • geo-caching trails • digital toposcopes • mobile phone dial-up audio access • a mobile-friendly version of www.dreamsthelens.com • a *Dream*-related social media presence • a smart-phone *Dream*-branded app. with augmented reality capability • onsite signage.

An integral element of this is also the creation of high quality; core branding and design work for the landmark *Dream* artwork and associated promotional materials and commercial merchandising.

The Smithy Manor pub has also been taken over by a new landlord who consults for the Chamber on pub rescue projects and is seeking to significantly enhance the pub.

Discover Your Doorstep! Campaign

The draft evaluation report on the visitor marketing campaign has been received which measures the value of the range of marketing and advertising activities that have taken place since April 2010 including the visitor guide, www.visitsthelens.com, outdoor media advertising, boundary & ped signs and online marketing activity. Results indicate that:

- Circa 49,000 visits have been generated by the advertising,
- An expected 4,000 future visits were also likely, which should be added to this figure and
- The strongest single influence was www.visitsthelens.com (25% of all visits attributed to this).

The overall impact of spend will be released with the final report in the New Year, and indications suggest that circa £4million has been generated for St.Helens economy.

STEAM 2009 visitor numbers and economic indicators for the region are due to be published by Christmas.

ACTION: JoW to circulate final evaluation report and STEAM 2009 visitor numbers.

St.Helens Visitor Guide 2011/12

16,000 copies of the updated visitor guide are in circulation. The data capture form inside is providing a profile picture of visitors, which will enable us to build a clear picture of who is visiting and where from. The final batch of guides is going to the Manchester region and beyond plus Tourist Information Centres and regional motorway services.

A limited number (1000 copies x 6 images) of promo **St.Helens and www.visitsthelens.com postcards** are available from the TIC and selected points across the town centre. The postcards feature iconic visitor images of Carr Mill Dam, World of Glass, Haydock Park, *Dream*, Saints and Wildflowers at Rainford.

A Groups/ Travel Trade leaflet is in production to target Group Travel Organisers to raise the profile of the St.Helens group offer and complement the current Groups Activity Plan consisting of FAM visits and advertising.

We will have a presence at the **Great Days Out Fair** on 5th March 2011 in Manchester to showcase the new guide, the first of its kind for St.Helens.

Visitsthelens.com

An e-newsletter, the first ever for St.Helens, will be circulated by Christmas in Discover Your Doorstep! branding, highlighting special offers, attractions and news. The target audience is the growing St.Helens customer database.

[Link to Christmas Visitsthelens.com enewsletter](#)

There has been a significant increase in hits to www.visitsthelens.com in November (9,469), which is the highest number of hits in the past two years. This may be due to a number of factors

including the NW Masters competitions with Visit Liverpool, Visit Manchester, and the Telegraph. The Christmas programme also went live and the Student Campaign is performing well from Edgehill Students Union website.

Brown tourist signage

Options are being investigated to provide brown tourist signage for the TLBN businesses including the NW National Golf Course, Inglenook Lavender Farm, Theatre Royal, Citadel and Darkstar Laser. Rural Leader funding is also an option to support the installation of brown signage in rural areas. JoW waiting on an update from David Wainwright in Traffic Planning.

ACTION: JoW to update at next TLBN

Town centre coach parking bays

To address the issue of a lack of designated coach drop/ stops in St.Helens, three locations within the town centre have been identified as potential locations for coach stops. They are:

- Charles Street, alongside the Theatre Royal - The proposal is for a shared coach/loading bay, which can be used by the theatre to service the stage area as well as coaches.
- Shaw Street, adjacent to the Friend's Garden.
- Cotham Street, alongside Wilkinsons - The proposal is to convert the currently under-used taxi rank to a shared taxi rank/coach stop.

A Traffic Regulation Order is underway, this procedure, which includes a period of consultation, is due for completion soon. Once complete, signs will be erected and carriageway markings amended.

Golf product development

The landscape of the 'England's Golf Coast' campaign is changing and should allow St.Helens golfing attractions to be involved, which the previous structure did not allow. Waiting on a full update from Charlie Grimley in the New Year.

ACTION: JoW to update at next TLBN.

BUSINESS LIAISON

Citadel Arts Centre

Husstle' from the X Factor show have been secured to perform their first St.Helens show since the success of the X Factor. They will be performing at the under 18's party night Epochalypse on Friday 4th February 2011.

Inglenook Lavender Farm

Held their Victorian Weekend on 28th November attended by the Mayor, with hundreds of visitors through their doors over the weekend. Activities continue up until 31st December including a Santa's grotto, children's rides and reindeer.

Ramada Encore Haydock

Hundreds attended the free Christmas Fair at the Ramada Encore on 25th November to purchase some early Christmas presents including local food and handmade craft suppliers.

NW Museum of Road Transport

The Museum is looking to implement a Groups and Educational programme in the New Year. They are liaising with the World of Glass on best practice and how to move their plans forward.

NW Masters Racing weekend at Haydock Park

Attendance was up 8% on last year for the event. Three very happy competition winners visited the Borough for the weekend, one through the Telegraph competition in conjunction with the Thistle and Haydock Park, and one in conjunction with Visitsthelens.com and Visit Liverpool.com. The competitions generated over 100 responses.

St.Helens Tourism & Leisure Awards

Shortlisting and judging have now taken place for the majority of categories, with a good number of entries on a par with last year and some new businesses e.g. MASH art gallery and Eccleston Park Golf Course. The gala dinner takes place on Friday 28th January 2011 at Haydock Park Racecourse.

The short-listed nominees are:

Most Welcoming Receptionist

Angela Fleming	The World of Glass
Hollie Draper	Park Inn
Kim Sharples	Premier Inn St.Helens North

Most Professional Sports and Leisure Person

Mark Deluce	St.Helens Council
Richard Jackson	Park Inn

Most Professional Bar Person

Pat Greer	Compass Group at Haydock Park Racecourse
Edward Kirby	Park Inn

Most Professional Waiter / Waitress

Lucy Mort	Kaleidoscope Café @ The World of Glass
Jackie Burke	Compass Group at Haydock Park Racecourse
Samantha Taylor	Ramada Encore
Valerie Travis	Thistle Haydock

The Unseen Hero

Phillipa Chesworth	Citadel Arts Centre
Ian Aldred	Haydock Park Racecourse
Yvonne Deville	Thistle Haydock
Brian Tate	Ramada Encore

Chef of the Year

Sean Raynor	Colours Restaurant
Paige Villiers Dawson	Colours Restaurant
Marin Gregory	Thistle Haydock
Jonathan Barr	Thistle Haydock

Outstanding Young Person

Simon Patterson	Citadel Arts Centre
Stuart Griffin	Haydock Park Racecourse
Laura Hende	Colours Restaurant
Jennifer Graham	St.Helens Council

Team of the Year

The World of Glass	Haydock Park	Eccleston Park Golf Course	Saints
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Most Supportive Tourism/Leisure Manager or Supervisor

Lesley Blakemore	The World of Glass
Vicki Hanlon	Park Inn
Peter Farrell	Ramada Encore
Jeff Barston	St.Helens Council

Retail Assistant of the Year

Norma Miller	The World of Glass
Diane Atherton	The World of Glass

Tourism/Leisure Entrepreneur of the Year

Fir Tree Farm 'Farmers Market'	MASH Art Gallery
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2010 St.Helens Ambassador

To be announced on the evening.

5. 'HEART OF THE NORTH WEST' BUSINESS TOURISM PROPOSAL

John Whaling, Dickon White and Barrie Kelly are progressing the 'Winning Venues' business tourism project with the aim of generating more enquiries and business for premium conference venues in St.Helens, Wigan, Warrington, Halton and Knowsley.

£10k NWDA funding for the project is in the process of being secured through TMP. The model involves dedicated branding, website development, minimal printed collateral, research, marketing and sales, with support from all partners plus research support from the relevant Tourist Boards.

ACTION: DW to update on progress at the next TLBN.

6. EVENTS UPDATE & PROGRESS

The Council Events Programme 2011 has now been announced.

Spring

Key event: St Helens Dance Festival with a big name attraction, dance week and dance live showcase event.

Support events: Continental Markets, Steve Prescott Foundation Run, Farmers Market, The Garden (town centre garden for kids), Craft Fayre.

Summer

Key events: St.Helens International Arts Festival, St.Helens Live Music event.

Support events: Farmers Market, The Beach (kids play), Morris Dancing competition.

Autumn

Key event: St.Helens Heritage Festival.

Support events: Farmers Market, Craft Fayre.

Winter

Key events: Firework display; Christmas Lights Switch-On, Grand Winter Parade.

For full event listings go to www.visitsthelens.com

7. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION ACTIVITIES & PROGRESS

Business Tourism

Liverpool Convention Bureau currently at EIBTM, Barcelona from November 30 – December 2. LCB will be exhibiting on the Visit Britain stand with the key messaging of international connectivity to the destination with two international airports servicing the City Region.

Work is underway for the Liverpool City Region Conference Portfolio 2011/12.

Development of the new conference website, www.LiverpoolConventionBureau.com is underway with a soft launch expected in Q3.

Seasonal Events Guide

The current edition covers November – March 2011 inclusive. 60,000 distribution - regional and national (including Virgin Trains Euston and Tate Britain). There was good St.Helens coverage in the latest Guide - Northwest Masters, Christmas programme and Theatre.

Travel Trade

New advertising creative has been developed for the 2011/12 travel trade advertising campaign. Messaging focuses on group travel friendly hotels, coach welcome and key events for 2011.

LCR Visitor Guide

Work is underway for the 2011/12 Liverpool City Region Visitor Guide. Expected delivery in Q4.

Web CRM

New VisitLiverpool.com website is now launched. The Northwest Masters was highlighted as a featured event and their Christmas events are featured on the themed festive pages.

The NW Masters also formed the major competition on the consumer e-blast (35,000 distribution).

Press and PR

TMP Tourism Press Officer Erica Dillon attended VisitBritain's annual VIBE PR workshop/networking event in London in September, to brief VB's Overseas Press Officers of the key City Region messages, followed by World Travel Market in November.

St.Helens has a presence in the Visit Liverpool Tourism Destination Update, a 13-page briefing document which is sent to all enquiring media and included in all Press Packs for visiting media – print, online and broadcast. The information includes details about *Dream*, Saints Stadium redevelopment and key events.

ACTION: All TLBN members to keep Erica up-to-date with developments/events so she can keep St.Helens in mind for future media activity. Erica.Dillon@merseyside.org.uk

ACTION: Erica to send JW and JoW the briefing document so they can review/update it

Tourism Development

Discussions with partners are ongoing to fine-tune the draft proposals for Visitor Economy projects that might apply to the Regional Growth Fund.

TMP continues to review budgets and work with other Tourist Boards in the North West with a view to re-shaping its funding and activities from April 2011.

Sector Development and Skills

Upselling and Service Recovery programme continues to be well supported – all programmes to the end of the year are full and further sessions will be offered in the New Year.

A series of FREE marketing workshops delivered at TMP by our own staff have proved to be very popular. Some of the sessions will be repeated in the New Year.

Liverpool Welcome programme of customer service and destination awareness ongoing. Further sessions to be added in the New Year.

8. TLBN BUSINESS UPDATE

DP updated on Queens Park Health & Fitness Centre, which is now open and has had a fantastic response from visitors.

RH commented that following the Group Leisure FAM visit, the World of Glass have received free editorial and bookings as a result.

9. AOB

Future St.Helens TLBN dates for 2011 (Venues to be confirmed)

Thursday 24th February 2pm

Weds 21st April 2pm

Tues 28th June 2pm

Friday 30th September 2pm

Thursday 1st December 2pm