

Runcorn & Widnes Tourism Business Network
9.30am Norton Priory Eco – Building (Walled Garden)
21st September 2010

Present

S. Bullen (SB), J. Doyle (JD), I. Rutter (IR), S. Fowler (SF), T. Leather (TL), C. McDade (CMc), M Jameson (MJ), K Jones (KJ), N Harrison (NH), B. Horabin (BH), D. Nowell (DN) C. Colquhoun (CC), G Brandwood (GB), S Rimmer (SR),

Apologies

P. Bentham, P. Audoire, Adam Munday, Roger Maher, Jill Maher

Welcome

- CMc welcomed people to the Walled Gardens and told the group work outside was to create a paved area in front of the new Tea-Room and the soon to be opened micro brewery.

Segway Smiles – Gareth Brandwood

- Been working with Norton Priory since August 2009 and started operating from May 2010.
- Offers guided tours on Segways around woods by Norton Priory and also bespoke events.
- Currently operating at weekends and bank holidays
- Segways run on electricity and so are environmentally friendly.
- Machines have roughly a 24 mile range.
- Tours start at £15 for 40-60 minutes, age limit of 14 years and above.
- Booking available through website www.segwaysmiles.com
- Any other businesses interested get in touch with Gareth

Business Update

- **Economic Development** – Need to use budget wisely as we are unsure how much or if any will be available in the future. Great Days Out Fair is now booked and is later in the year (March) as it has moved to the Museum of Museums in the Trafford Centre.
- **Daresbury Church**–Lewis Carroll project has been ready to go for a number of months but has been delayed by objections, latest by Victorian Society. There is a danger that funding could be lost as some of it has deadlines. Still hopeful of being open middle of 2011.
- **Everglades** – Doing really well. Past 2 months been very positive. Some corporate business has returned now the summer holidays have finished. Leisure business in particular has been very good. More packages being put in place to encourage visitors.
- **Farnworth** - Church recently had its heritage weekend; weather was not very favourable but flower festival was very popular. Also conducted a heritage walk around Farnworth which has proved very popular. SB to speak again to Jean Bradburn at Widnes Library re producing the walk as part of existing Heritage Trails leaflets. Initial opposition from the author who devised the original walk BH has been involved in discussions with local Councillors regarding making the village a heritage area.
BH to speak to SR after the meeting regarding brown signs.
- **DC Leisure** – Main news is that free swimming has been stopped nationally causing some complaints from users. Gym has been extended at Kingsway and membership is over 1,000 for the first time in a while.

Currently working with Sports Development providing Open Days in the build up to London Olympics.

- **Dianne Nowell** – Work for guides has gone down in Merseyside as a whole despite a number of cruise ships coming to Liverpool. Slide show business has dropped off considerably.
- **De-Vere** – Lots of bookings since Easter weekend. Mainly down to weekend and in particular family trade which has been aggressively marketed. Weekdays improving as local business parks continue to develop and become occupied.
- **SR** – Restrictions on bridge will continue as work painting the bridge gets underway. Unsure as to what those restrictions will be as yet. Looking at more signs re delay times eg on Speke Rd but cost/time appears prohibitive.
- **Catalyst** – New director trying to sort out ERDF funding which has been stopped since February. Best August since 2006. New playground helped. Some new exhibits coming in, sponsored by companies.
- **Ski Slope and Railway** – Starting busier period now after summer. Play area working very well for both Ski Slope and Railway. Numbers on the railway have doubled at least in past year.
JD to remind railway committee members about getting quotes for website. SB said that funding may not be available for much longer.
- **Norton Priory** – Not as many admissions this year and currently trying to work out why. Income has increased as a result of claiming gift aid.
Marketing walled gardens more heavily. 17th October Farmers Market and Quince and Apple Day.
More fundraising activities this year including 5k Santa Dash planned for Christmas in conjunction with Halton Haven.

Liverpool Airport Marketing (Tim Leather)

- Peel, owners of Liverpool Airport, invited TL & SB to airport to see new developments with a view to sell advertising space.
- Looking at potential adverts around baggage reclaim area possible highlighting Daresbury area initially. TL & SB to work on this and get back to the group.
- CMC stated she believed this type of joint marketing would be the way forward.
- TL & SB to look at ways of producing a promotional brochure under TBN heading for general distribution.

Halton Business & Tourism Awards

- Nomination forms all sent out. Online application form still a problem but SB to e-mail the link once this is resolved.
- 3rd December deadline for applications

TMP Round-Up

- NWDA being abolished to be replaced by private sector partnerships. Lots of changes but should know more by October.
- Regional Growth Fund is open for bids which need to have an outcome of creating private sector growth/jobs.
- In-house cuts at TMP including 4 redundancies in Tourism Team, including Karen Illingworth, which means the end of skills training initiatives.
- ERDF funding still available for 2 more years providing it can be matched.
- Hotels in Merseyside region still doing extremely well, although some concern for hotels in Liverpool City Centre because of number of new hotels.

- Virgin Trains reported a 70% increase in traffic into Liverpool Lime Street on Bank Holiday weekend.
- 3 year action plan for visitor economy targets 2,000 new jobs in the region over the period.

AOB

- Up- Skilling and Recovery course targeted at customer facing employees available from TMP on 11th October. Cost of £40 per person.(£25 in house)
- SB requested people continued to send info on events etc to either herself or SG to go on www.visithalton.com website.
- Creamfields going ahead in Daresbury in 2011. Tickets now on sale. Site currently up for sale and some suggestion organisers may want to move it to London.

Next meeting mid January –venue & date tbc