



## Chairpersons Report 2023

Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism

Annual General Meeting

22 November 2023, 4-5:30pm



## Introduction

Yvette and I, as Co-chairs would like to welcome you all to Hartpury University to the 2023 Annual General Meeting of Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Ltd.

We are pleased introduce Stuart Emmerson, Director of Business Development to welcome everyone on behalf of Hartpury University.

This is the formal part of the meeting, where as Co-Chairs we present our report on the activity that the organisation has undertaken in the last year and where Kelly Berryman, our Treasurer, reports on our financial position. We will now hand over to Kelly Berryman our Treasurer to give us an overview of our **accounts from 2022** which were approved and submitted to companies house in July 2023.

There has been a hive of activity since last year that we are delighted to update you on. Firstly, we welcomed our first Head of Tourism in November last year, Rebecca Clay – who a lot of you will have met and you will hear from in a moment.

This year we conducted the following **Business Support Activity**. We ran two training courses – one delivered by Rebecca and Jo in February which gave our partners hints and tips on how to get the best out of their partnership packages with the organisation. This session was delivered online.

The second event was our **Pricing Strategy Workshop** an in-person event held in September and a big thank you to the beautiful Angel Hotel in Abergavenny for hosting and feeding our delegates so wonderfully. This session saw Simon Addisson Business Manager for the Roman Baths talk about how the site had adopted a new approach to pricing products and got our partners to think about how to think about pricing strategically.

Alongside these more formal events, we ran a series of **4 partner Netwalking Events** which took partners out for a walk together to discover the landscape and often end at a pub. The events encouraged our partners to connect with each other and chat in an informal setting. They also gave the opportunity to chat with the board, Rebecca or Jo depending on who was leading the session.

We continued to signpost our partners to information advice and training opportunities from stakeholders such as the AONB, the Councils, Visit Britain and Visit Wales, through our Facebook Partners Group and our partner newsletter. We increased the number of our partners from 199 in March 2022 to 244 in October 2023 and we are delighted to welcome all our new members some of you are with us today, a big thank you to you for joining us.

## **Marketing**

We ran two **campaigns all about weddings** to encourage Brides to Be (and Grooms Ready to Go) to have their Destination Wedding in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley. The campaign also promoted the amazing Stag and Hen activities and accommodation providers we have in the destination. The Campaign was conducted through Facebook and Instagram and used the wonderful images we have from you

our partners and directed visitors to our newly developed wedding pages on our website. We ran the adverts in January to capture the newly engaged at Christmas and in July in the thick wedding season to inspire weddinggoers to think about their own nuptials.

The January Advert reached nearly 7,000 people and the larger summer campaign reached 10,970 and delivered 74,928 impressions.

**Flowers in the Forest and Wye.** To celebrate the beautiful array of flora that coat the floor of the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley in Springtime we created a sticker trail around the destination designed to encourage families to visit more than one place during Half-Term and perhaps try something new. 17 partners were sourced to be sticker locations each with a different wildflower sticker to collect. The destinations also handed out trail cards. The pickup rate was incredible high so much so that we had to re-print. The trail worked much better for our attraction partners than our accommodation partners, with most of the completed entries coming from them. If we look to replicate the trail, we would like to make it a more digital offering to reduce any wastage. The trail received coverage from: •Forest Review <https://www.theforestreview.co.uk/news/families-invited-to-find-forest-flowers-in-a-bid-to-win-a-chocolatey-prize-this-easter-604189>

•BBC Radio Gloucestershire Nicky Price Breakfast Show 15 April Rajar Figures 2166 [https://www.rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly\\_listening.php](https://www.rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly_listening.php).

And the social media campaign delivered:

Bluebells page 2,192 page views

Daffodils page 1,629 page views

Blog 514

135 engagements on Instagram

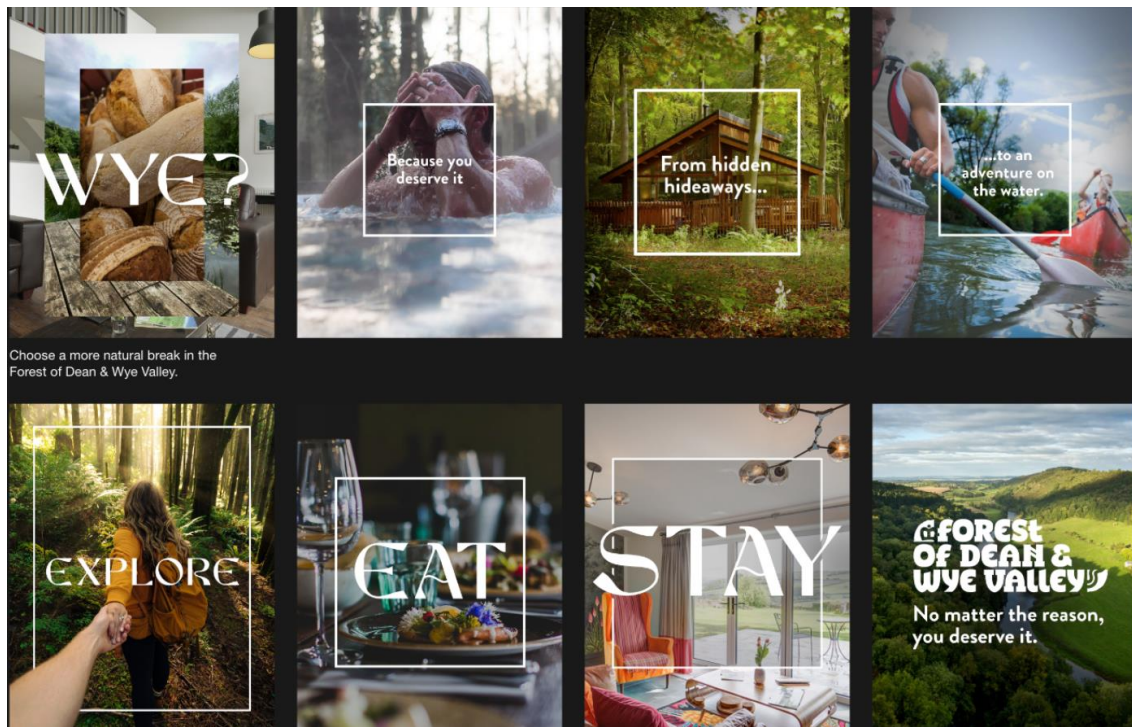
223 engagements on Facebook

Facebook reach 9,116

The total spend for the whole trail was less than £1000 so although the completions were low the exposure for the cost was great.

In May we ran a **Facebook and Instagram Campaign** targeting couples outside of a 60 minute drive time to encourage overnight stays. The Campaign was highly successful in reaching a targeted audience, generating significant engagement, and driving traffic to our website. The campaign achieved an impressive reach of over 200,000 people, generating over 419,000 impressions and a link CTR of 0.85%. Notably, the campaign's video content garnered substantial attention, with over 100,000 video watches at the 100% mark. The average CPC was £0.48 and the average CPM was £4.79.





## Key Findings

- The campaign effectively targeted specific personas, resonating with their interests and preferences.
- The campaign's high reach and impressions indicate successful audience engagement.
- The strong link CTR demonstrates the compelling nature of the campaign's messaging and visuals.
- The substantial video viewership highlights the effectiveness of video content in capturing audience attention.
- The relatively low CPC and CPM suggest efficient ad spend and cost-effectiveness.

The **Visit Dean Wye - Summer 2023 campaign** was successful in reaching a large audience and driving traffic to our website. The campaign generated over 199,000 impressions and 714 link clicks, resulting in a link CTR of 0.36%. The average CPC was £0.50 and the average CPM was £4.45. The campaign also generated 94 supplier website clicks, resulting in a CPA of £9.41.



## Key Findings

- The campaign reached a large audience of over 76,000 people.
- The campaign generated a high number of impressions, with a frequency of 2.59.
- The campaign had a moderate link CTR of 0.36%.
- The average CPC was £0.50 and the average CPM was £4.45.
- The campaign generated a good number of supplier website clicks, with a CPA of £9.41.

We are currently in the delivery phase of our Autumn Leaf Peeping Campaign which this year has been funded by GWR to encourage families to travel into and around the destination sustainably. Working with Travel Tonic PR we are delivering a press and PR campaign which promoted the area as a great place to see the Autumn Colours, we are also working with them to promote the destination as the perfect place to stay this Christmas. Best magazine has been into the destination to mock up a Christmas image at Perrygrove and will cover the other Christmas events going on across the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley this year.

A big element of this campaign was the launch of our brilliant leaf-peeping video created late last year. We were overwhelmed by the support for it from our partners many of you using it on your social media channels to help extend its reach. A big thank you to all of you who shared it. If you haven't shared it and you would like to please reach out to us and we will send the usage guidelines out to you.

We have also conducted a number of **influencer visits** this year. In July we welcomed back Lee and Tran Scarrat (<https://www.instagram.com/explorewithlee/> and [https://www.instagram.com/wanderluster\\_tran/](https://www.instagram.com/wanderluster_tran/)) to the destination with their young daughter Eliza, this trip came at a perfect time for us when intense heat across Europe saw more families with young children wanting to take a staycation where the climate was more moderate. The influencers had a combined follower base of 80,000 and the visit delivered a combined reach of 20,000 and had 240 post engagements.

We also hosted two super-influencers this year.

In September we worked with Ross-on-Wye Tourism and welcomed Evalina ([https://www.instagram.com/wander\\_linaa/](https://www.instagram.com/wander_linaa/)) and her husband to Ross-on-Wye's Equinox Festival. Evalina has 148,000 followers and her posts attracted over 2000 likes and reached 30,000 accounts. We also welcomed James ([InTentToBe \(@intenttobe\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)) to undertake some beautiful forest filming and his content performed stunningly attracting nearly 6,000 likes on his posts and hundreds of comments.

In early November we worked with Fritha Quinn ([Fritha Quinn \(@tigerlillyquinn\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)) as part of the GWR funded campaign. Fritha is known

for her carless adventures. Fritha created a beautiful Reel of her stay and experience receiving over 1000 likes for her content and dozens of comments complimenting her choice of stay and travel.

We continued to work on the Forest of Dean District Council SPF-funded film project which this year saw us redevelop all the content on our film and tv pages for the website which drastically improved the performance of these pages. They moved from –page rank 50 on the website to page rank 5. Our Co-Chair Helen also was able to work with our partners to get their properties listed on Creative England's Film Listings which was successful with 33 new partners signing up as locations. We worked with Thomas Duke from Stepping Through Film ([Thomas Duke \(@steppingthroughfilm\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)) who's super account has over 375,000 followers. Tom posted about Sex Education in the Wye Valley, and Star Wars and Merlin in Forest of Dean. Next year we will be working together again on other cult programmes such as The End of the \*\*\*\*\* World and The Change.

We also had new productions being filmed in the destination. The Change a Channel 4 Comedy hit our screens in June and threw a spotlight onto the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley as the protagonist moves to live in a Caravan in the Forest of Dean. Locations included Speech House Woods and Symonds Yat. The feature-length horror film Inland was also filmed in the Forest of Dean starring and produced by Mark Rylance. Finally, it would be remiss of us not to mention the last season of Sex Education which is always such a positive advert for the Wye Valley as it shot so beautifully, and we were able to benefit from the announcement that it would be the last series in March and then the release date in September.

## Website performance

The website has performed well this year growing on its 2022 figures. Figures from 1 January to 31 October 2023 show the website received 350,000 users compared to 333,000 users in 2022 an increase of 5%. Both figures beat our pre-pandemic figures of 318,000 users in the same period, which is impressive. The top-performing UK cities are London (36%), Birmingham (4%), Bristol (3.3%) and Cardiff (2.7%).

The top-performing overseas destinations are the US (8.3%) Australia (1.8%) and the Netherlands (1%).

This year we created our first **Sustainability Action Plan** which has created a workable plan for us to be able to help lower the emissions tourism contributes. The plan is constructed of three strands, influencing visitor behaviour – helping our visitors make greener choices when they are in the destination, supporting our partners to lower their carbon emissions and looking at our own practices to ensure we are being the change we want to see. You can find our plan on our website [here](#). We were successful in **several funding bids** this year. Starting the year with £4200 being awarded to the organisation from the Department of International Trade and Visit Gloucestershire to attend Britain and Ireland Marketplace, the Southwest

Destination Showcase and the Visit Britain Showcase event. We were then successful in securing a Control Outbreak Management Fund grant for £9,500 from Forest of Dean District Council which funded Flowers in the Forest and Wye and our Easter Campaign – we supplemented this with our core budget which allowed us to feature partners from across Wales and Herefordshire also. In September we were awarded £28,000 from GWR's Community Fund to allow us to undertake promotional work around sustainable travel and connecting low-income urban families to nature.

As always there is a long list of thank Yous. Thank you to my fellow Board Members who's direction and dedication to the organisation is invaluable. Thank you to Kelly Berryman for her financial guidance as our accountant alongside Mark George as Treasurer keeping all the figures on track in a year where we have received income from various different sources. Thank you to Rebecca who's guidance and leadership for the organisation has seen us really up our game as a DMO this year and she has delivered some brilliant projects and been successful in bringing in funding. But mainly thank you to you all – we are only here because of you – we have loved seeing how you have delighted visitors this year and we know and appreciate the hard work that takes. We always say this relationship is one where the more you put in the more you get out and this year we have had brilliant interactions with our partners.

We are, as always, hugely grateful to the Forest of Dean District Council for our SLA, and the increased support they have help us secure until 2025. Their continued support and guidance has been critical to us thriving.

We would also like to thank our other strategic partners: our Cotswolds Plus LVEP Partners, Forestry England, GFirst LEP and the Growth Hub, Wye Valley AONB and Monmouthshire County Council.

In December 2021, we appointed Ignyte Ltd for three years to manage our partnerships. In 2023 Ignyte grew our partnership base bringing on board another 44 partners and not to mention upgrading a number of partners onto new packages. We would like to thank the whole Ignyte team for their support. And, we would like to say a special thank you and good luck to Jo who was part of our partnership team and who has gone to work for the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership and we welcome Shelly who is with us today who has taken on Jo's role.

We would like to thank Lynda Serenake, Rachael Geddes and Martin Sweeney who have all served on the board this year and have now stepped down. Three remaining directors eligible to do so, Mark Terry-Lush, Yvette Farrell and Helen O'Kane will now step down until such time as the voting is closed at 5pm today and the new board will be announced then. We will also ask the new board members to vote for a chair during the recess and that will also be announced at 5:15pm.

Thank you Yvette Farrell and Helen O'Kane Co-Chairs

