



Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism Association

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010

This year we have worked closely both with Capital Region Tourism (Wales) who have managed to find us several grants of which more later, and with the Forest of Dean District Council Tourism Dept who have been encouraging many businesses to join us. This has meant that, for the first time, our membership has climbed above 300. Our income was over £36,500 and we have worked hard to spend your money wisely.

At the latter part of the year we have been over-shadowed by the threatened severe shrinking of tourism services supplied to our industry by the public sector and are working hard with individual businesses to get our booklets as widely distributed as possible. We have also put considerable pressure on Monmouthshire County Council to rethink their plans to close some or all TICs in the county. A decision is still awaited on whether the lobby groups have successfully reversed the decision not to open the TIC in the newly-restored Monmouth Shire Hall.

Your committee steered an entry into the Partnership Award section of the National Tourism Awards for Wales. A great deal of work was put in and we were delighted to be runners up, only beaten by an Association that has paid staff and European funding.

We also added our endorsement to the HOOOF campaign which has had considerable initial success in keeping our forests in public ownership.

Website

There has been considerable updating and enhancing to our website during the year as we feel this is the main thrust of our marketing efforts.

a) Videos - After some difficulties with production, we have now had two further videos completed and loaded onto our site – one is a general video highlighting the family-friendly aspects of the area's offer, the other more specifically the heritage of the area. We feel that our family of 3 videos provides an excellent marketing tool.

b) Home Page – the design has been refreshed and we have added several features:-

i) A review box showing the two latest reviews received to the site for our member businesses,

ii) Specific information of walks, walking and walks books and how to get them

c) Amazon On-Line Shopping – We have also added this facility and tried to feature items that we think will be of interest to the visitor. The Association will receive a small percentage of any sales made through our portal.

d) Disclaimer – A Disclaimer has been added to the website to help protect us against liability for publishing any negative reviews and also because we link to many other websites.

e) Things To Do Sub-Category – all the Attractions and Activities can now be found by type as well as name.

f) Web Banner Ads - We have increased the number of these to allow 5 per category on the inside pages, as well as the 12 Home page banners. The cost has been held at the well-below market price of £100 for another year.

Shows and Exhibitions

We have again attended the Abergavenny Food Festival, the Monmouth Show, the Forest Showcase, A Sense of Place Showcase at Chepstow Racecourse, and the Usk Show.

Publications –

12 Easy Walks, our new booklet of walks for non-walkers, has been extremely well received and complimented and the 10,000 print-run was quickly used up. We have been fortunate to receive further sponsorship from MCC and Labels Outlet Shopping and are now in the process of reprinting a further 20,000 copies. The 3rd editions of the **Do Something** Different booklet and **Great Places to Eat** have both been distributed widely. All our accommodation members have again had a free line-entry in the Forest of Dean Visitor Guide.

Further Marketing — A lengthy campaign has been run with **Google Adwords** in the accommodation sections to try to encourage more people to stay in the area.

Golf Breaks Package — A lot of time has been put into trying to raise funding to kick off this special marketing package but unfortunately, due to various circumstances, it is not going ahead at present.

Funding – Capital Region Tourism (S Wales) have again generously match-funded us for:
12 Easy Walks Booklet

Familiarisation Tours for WVFDTA Members

Financial support for WVFDTA Administration

Website Video

Recruitment and Retention of WVFDTA Members. (Benefits of Membership flyers, and New Member Information Packs)

As stated above, MCC and Labels have assisted us in the reprint of 12 Easy Walks.

We are entering into the 2011-12 year very aware that the public sector support from the English councils, central Government and the national tourism bodies is going to be minimal and that, in the private sector, we are going to be expected to stand on our own two feet, more than ever before.