

CHAIRMEN'S REPORT 2011

PARTY - We started the year with our now customary post Christmas party at Monmouth Shire Hall which is always a very successful opportunity for members to network. It was preceded by a fascinating tour of the restored Hall. Through the year we had several very illuminating tours of member businesses, including Forest Hills Golf Club, Whitemead Forest Park, and Westons Cider. We also had presentations on Sustainable Heating Systems and LED Lighting and were kept up to date with the developments with VisitHerefordsire.

CHANGE TO COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE A great deal of work was undertaken during the year and much time was taken up considering the structure of our now greatly expanded organisation. Firstly we considered updating the Constitution and including a voting procedure for committee members, and the acquisition of adequate indemnity insurances. Subsequently, we suggested to the membership that the Association should now move to become a company limited by guarantee. This work was ongoing at the end of the year, with a view to doing everything necessary to make the change by 2012's AGM.

Marketing

We have continued to use all available means to market the area to its utmost.

- a) **EXPLORE GLOUCESTERSHIRE APP** was launched and members given preferential rates.
- b) **SHOWS** – We have made a concerted effort to have a stand at all the major local shows this year. However we found that there was very little help offered from the general membership which was very disappointing and so we decided to reduce our presence to the 4 major local shows in 2012.
- c) **GOOGLE ADWORDS** have been run all year as the main selling tool, other than the website, for our accommodation providers.
- d) **SOCIAL MEDIA** – The increasing importance of social media was recognised and that none of the committee had the time to take care of it. 2 Tenders were sought and ACM Digital were engaged for a year to set up facebook and twitter accounts for us and to run our campaign. This will be reviewed after a year.
- e) **MONMOUTHSHIRE TICs**. We were pleased that the result of a major fight to protect the Monmouthshire's TICs was a reprieve for at least a year. Monmouth TIC moved back to the Shire Hall and now comes under their management budget and Chepstow TIC was put on a more commercial footing.

COTSWOLD & FOREST OF DEAN DMO - It was felt that there was no gain from our membership of the Cotswolds & Forest of Dean Destination Management Organisation and so we agreed with FODDC that it was sensible to pull out and that there would be talks amongst the local bodies to forge stronger ties.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION - THE MEMBERSHIP agreed an increase in subscription for 2012 to £80 per member.

ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES It was widely reported and believed that self-catering properties would be forced to obtain these. After much research, we were able to reassure members that they would not be pursued for these, unless it was a new build or conversion.

GEOCACHING was discussed and its relevance to marketing the area. A short information course for interested members is to be arranged early in 2012..

LOCAL BUSINESS SERVICES sector – was proposed to bring into membership local businesses that would be of interest to our members. The introductory membership fee of £40 per year was agreed with the production of a small guide, shortly to be printed and become available to members in early 2012..

DIGITAL PROJECT WITH MONMOUTHSHIRE Several members were involved in consultations on our digital strategy with the hope of releasing some funding which we planned to use on the creation of an APP for the area. This stalled as the criteria were not fulfilled but it is hoped the Welsh Government may allow a change in the coming year which would release the funds.

FODDC WEBSITE Initial talks were held with FODDC with a view to a possible merging of our two websites to produce a new up-to-date online service that will benefit both local businesses and visitors alike. These will be ongoing in 2012.

MONMOUTHSHIRE WEBSITE – At the end of the year we were also in preliminary discussions with Monmouthshire regarding how they see future delivery of tourism services and there seems a strong likelihood that the Association may be invited to participate. We will await further discussions but it looks to be going forward.

The last two items confirm the feeling we held at the end of 2010 when we realised that public funding was going to shrink and that the Tourism Association would be placed in a position where it needs to pick up the slack. The next 12 months may well see some major changes in delivery and require some careful strategic planning on our part. It will be an interesting year.