

SOUTH SHROPSHIRE TOURISM LIMITED

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 21st May 2009 held at The Ludlow Food Centre

1. Welcome

The Chairman Ian Kemsley welcomed all members and guests to the first meeting of the Limited Company.

2. Apologies

Secretary Jodie Stephen reported that apologies had been received from 70 members. A list will be attached with the minutes of the meeting.

3. Minutes of previous AGM

The minutes of the 2008 South Shropshire Tourism Association AGM were approved.

Proposer – Kay Dartnell

Seconder – Cynthia Prior

4. Matters Arising

None

5. Chairman's Report

Ian reported on the past year, and the changes that had taken place with regards to the limited company status.

He explained that the company had three directors, himself, Geoff Grimes and Lee Chapman, and board members, Kay Dartnell, Anne Oakes Jones, Cynthia Prior and Jane Cronin. Anne Holland would act as a consultant for the company. He felt that the company had a good mix of people on board.

Ian also explained the change unitary had brought to the company. Tim King was no longer exclusively the Tourism Officer for the South Shropshire area. Tim, along with Alison Patrick, Delia Yapp and Louise Cross was part of the Economic Development department at the Shropshire Council, part of whose remit was tourism, and SST planned to have twice yearly meetings with them to give their views. He informed the members that one of these meetings had already taken place and two main points had arisen; i) that the good relationships SST already had with the VIC's should continue and be built upon, and ii) that the company should expand their relationship with local tourism groups and parish councils, as they would be playing a bigger role in tourism in the future.

Ian also talked about the Ludlow & the Shropshire Hills brochure and the that the board had made the decision to cut the number of pages, and print run for the 2010 brochure. He hoped this would meet with the members approval, and thanked them for the

contribution as advertisers. He also mentioned the South Shropshire Discovery map and that they hoped to do a re-print of this or a similar attractions leaflets and sell advertising space in conjunction with the brochure.

Ian concluded his report by reminding members of the importance of tourism to Shropshire, quoting the figure of 566 million as the value of tourism to the county. He thanked Simon and Jodie from Shropshire Tourism for their support and help with the brochure and other projects, and the past SSTA committee members for their support over the last 20 or so years. He also thanked fellow directors Geoff and Lee for their support in the set up of the Limited Company.

6. Treasurers Report

Ian presented the year end accounts to the members. He explained the situation with regards to the change of Treasurer. As a Limited Company one of the directors would be in charge of the company's finances, Ian had taken over this role from Sarah Pritchard, who had looked after the accounts until end of March 2009.

Ian also informed the members that the company had changed banks from Lloyds to HSBC.

Referring to the accounts, Ian said they hoped not to make a loss next year, with the reduced costs on the brochure for 2010, and the fact that these accounts showed two lots of brochure distribution payments.

Member Rosemary Wood asked the question whether the amount spent on the brochure was justified when comparing it with the amount of business it generated. Ian responded by opening the question to the floor. The overall response was that the majority of enquiries came via the website; however Reg Maund stated that 90% of his bookings came from the brochure. Rosemary suggested producing a form that would allow members to track the enquiries they receive from the brochure. Elizabeth Hatchell stated that she has 99% of her enquiries from websites, the top four being her own bespoke site, Alistair Sawday in second place, www.ludlow.org.uk in third and www.shropshiretourism.co.uk in fourth.

Rob Tromans mentioned a special offer that he had put on the VisitBritain website and the lack of responses he gained from it, other members agreed. Simon stated that most business to Shropshire comes direct and not via the VisitBritain website, Shropshire Tourism has tracked this and found that visitors know where they want to come and do go direct to Shropshire websites rather than national sites. He reminded members of the special offers page on the www.shropshiretourism.co.uk website and that this page attracted a quarter of the traffic to the site.

Commenting on the VB offer, Ian stated that this was an example of why bids for funding from the Telford & Shropshire Destination Management Partnership should come directly from the tourism associations and Shropshire Tourism. An explanation was given by Geoff on who the DMP were and what their role was; a public/private sector partnership set up to distribute and put forward ideas for funding for the county.

The accounts were approved; proposed by Lee and seconded by Geoff.

7. Elections

Ian informed the members that elections would not take place at this AGM as the directors and board members had been elected at the EGM held in January, and these would be carried forward to the 2010 AGM.

He also informed members that Town Tourism Group Representatives would now be invited to every SST meeting, they will not have the right to vote, but will be able to join in with discussions.

8. Any other business

Reg Maund brought up the subject of internet booking, and how he feels you can't tell what type of customer you are getting from an email. Some members agreed with his point, but the majority felt that you can still tell the type of enquirer from the way the email is written, and scams are usually quite easy to detect. Lee stated the point that businesses must expose themselves to the opportunity of bookings via any means, keep their options open.

Ian invited Simon to update the members on the Accommodation Assessment Scheme. Simon reported that since 1st April, 11 assessments had taken place from 25 applications received to date.

Elizabeth Hatchell said she had received her assessment and was very impressed with it.

Sue Benson asked if the scheme was instead of VisitBritain, Simon stated that it was an alternative and the members had a choice, he pointed out that Shropshire Tourism still support the AA and VB. Geoff made the point that he had spoken to Simon in the past with regards to the high cost of VB inspections for Shropshire properties and that Simon had contacted Quality in Tourism in the hope of getting prices reduced, but the Accommodation Assessment Scheme has been a bigger improvement.

The issue of gold and silver awards, walkers and cyclists welcome and national accessibility awards were brought up by various members, Simon said that the walkers and cyclists awards were to be addressed first as they help to reassure visitors when booking this specialised accommodation.

Joyce Williams asked if FarmStay UK would recognise the scheme, Elizabeth Hatchell said that the local Farm Holiday Group group would. With regards to recognition of the scheme, Simon informed the members that he had been advised that Advantage West Midlands was mindful to consider supporting the scheme as it saw it as a business advantage.

Ian brought up the issue of Fire Safety Regulations, and that fact that after a lobby from bed providers at 10 Downing Street, the guidelines were not now as rigorous as they were and are now national guidelines rather differing region to region. However you still need the basics of a Fire Risk Assessment and smoke alarms.

Rob Tromans asked if anyone had heard about the change in taxes for holiday lets and said he would provide further information for the members.

The issues of bed tax and the Performing Rights Society were also discussed.

The Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 3.30pm