

Food and Tourism Partnership, 19th January 2015

Present: Alan Curless, Clare Greener, Bobbie Heavens, Jenny Beard, Nick Read, Cathy Meredith, David Bailey, David Curtis

Apologies: Christine Hope, Rachel Jones

Introductions

- Alan was welcomed to the Partnership.
- Cathy was congratulated on the award of her MBE.

Broadband report

The latest and final version of the report is the one dated 7th January 2015. Changes had been made in response to Fastershire and Hereford Council and it was important to disseminate it. Nick would draft the covering letter, Jenny would sign as Chair and partnership members would take responsibility for dissemination (as follows):

Jesse Norman, Bill Wiggin, Frank Myers, Anthea McIntyre, Julian Partridge, John Carter, Rob Newbury	Clare
Roger Williams, Edward Harley, Mike Ashton, Dr Andy Watts, Alistair Neil, Geoff Hughes,	Jenny
Richard Ashguard-Sandys, Angela Fitch, Philip Dunne, Bishop Richard, Roger Phillips, Karen Usher,	Nick
Patrick Bagg, National Trust personnel	David B
Philip Price, Graham Powell, Toby Murcott, John Coleman	Cathy
Julian Morgan, Henry Robinson, Caroline Bedell, George Dunne	David C
Lady Cobham	Alan

To be determined: All of the MEPs (in addition to Anthea), the Chair of the EFRA Committee, Neil Parish, Gill Hamer, Leaders of the parties in Herefordshire Council, Prospective Parliamentary candidates for Herefordshire

Jesse Norman and Bill Wiggin would be invited to the meeting on 13th March.

David C reported that he and Cathy had been invited to the next meeting of the Fastershire Evaluation Committee.

Rural Digital Support Centre

The broadband report had helped to identify Herefordshire's needs w.r.t. broadband and this had led to the lobbying for a Defra Digital Support Centre following a visit of John Carter from the RPA to the county. The centre was to be established at Hereford's NFU offices and would be open every Tuesday for people to attend by appointment. There would also be workshops across the county from 3rd March onwards. The initiative was to be launched at the Green Futures event on 3rd February. The digital by design programme included "slow release of functionality" i.e. Defra were unable to say what the final thing would look like at this stage and people would need to keep revisiting the site as it was developed.

Visit Herefordshire

Alan reported on developments within Visit Herefordshire (VH). He would like the Partnership to act as the Strategic Advisory Board to VH and Jenny would occupy a seat on the VH Board with responsibility for this.

Since his appointment in November Alan had contacted over 80 organisations and individuals and various strategies and initiatives were under development:

- A financial strategy (VH's funding from the Council had fallen from £600k to £88k in 2015 and would be zero from 2016)
- Marketing, PR and social media strategy, including more effective tweeting
- Digital strategy
- Risk management strategy
- Funding bids and sponsorship documents with the need to develop income streams and reintroduce a membership scheme
- Better uptake of the website (increasing annual usage from 650k to 1m hits)
- Discussions on branding
- Better use of publications and visitor information services. Less than one quarter of leaflets in Herefordshire tourist destinations promoted Herefordshire, compared to >80% in Cornwall.
- A Destination Management Plan
- Partnerships, networking and business support
- Events and exhibitions including Flavours of Herefordshire
- He was keen to develop "The Herefordshire Experience", combining accommodation, food and the local environment.
- VH was working alongside universities (including student sandwich placements), the Hereford BID and neighbouring tourism associations.
- Research had identified a major requirement for 4 star accommodation and conference facilities in the county.

Bobbie indicated that she was attending a major exhibition in 2015 in support of VH with the Rural Concierge.

LEADER and LEP

- There was a brief update on LEADER, where nothing was expected now before July. Small capital grants would be available for businesses.
- Nick was a substitute for Angela Fitch (Hereford Business Board) on the LEP's ESIF Committee. Caroline Bedell was the rural lead and we would support her call for the establishment of a rural business group.
- Jenny and Alan had attended the LEP tourism group. £1.2m pa was available for tourism but Herefordshire looked as if it would get less than 30% of this.
- Gill Hamer was a key component of the way ahead and would be invited to a future meeting.

Buttermarket

Nick reported that Jo Hilditch's group had been invited to submit a full business plan proposal for the Buttermarket and that the Bulmer Foundation's Food for Growth CIC was to be the legal vehicle initially.

Herefordshire Business Board

HBB and the Partnership were to become more formally aligned, sharing agendas and minutes etc. Nick, Cathy and Clare would progress this and help to generate an effective working relationship and work plan.

Annual Report

Nick had produced a Partnership Annual report for 2014 available for circulation.

Future meetings

13th March @ 2pm at the Duchy Offices (Herefordshire MPs to be invited to lunch at 1.15pm)

20th April @ 2pm at the Cider Museum

16th June @ 2pm at the Duchy Offices