

## Herefordshire Sustainable Food & Tourism Partnership: Annual Report 2014

The Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership was formed in 2014 as a merger between the long established Herefordshire Sustainable Food Partnership and a newly emerging, and grassroots led, tourism group.

The Partnership's Terms of Reference are to:

- Provide strategic oversight for the development and implementation of a sustainable strategy and action plan for Food & Tourism in the County of Herefordshire.
- Link with key strategic bodies and organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to promote a sustainable food and tourism strategy and its implementation.
- Develop collaborative food and tourism actions/activities that act as a 'showcase' for authentic, real and genuine '*experiences that delight*' the consumer.
- Integrate consumers with the local economy, and enhance their health and well-being; whether they are visitors to the County or those living and/or working in Herefordshire.

At its heart is a coalition of key individuals, organisations and networks committed to providing strategic oversight for the development and delivery of sustainable food and tourism strategies. These include consultants, private businesses, the Duchy of Cornwall, National Farmers Union, Visit Herefordshire, the National Trust, Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Rural and Farming Network, Herefordshire Council and the Bulmer Foundation. This "core group" has met every two months during the year and is augmented by a wider reference group and task and finish groups, as needed. Administrative support has been provided by Herefordshire Rural Hub, the Duchy of Cornwall and the Bulmer Foundation. An inaugural partnership meeting was held at the Three Counties Hotel in March involving key people from the tourism and food sectors across the county. There was widespread support for the aims and objectives of the Partnership. The discussion continued with a second event held in May.

The activities of the Partnership during 2014 have included:

### **1. Meetings/briefings with key people**

These are people able to influence the development of the food and tourism sectors in Herefordshire, including:

- Stephen Badham, Senior Production Manager for Creative England;
- Alistair Neal, Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council;
- Richard Tyler, Sustainable Tourism Manager for Brecon Beacons National Park

### **2. Project and developmental work**

- Inputting to the development of an Economic Master Plan for Herefordshire, a Council-led initiative to develop a strategy for economic growth over the next fifteen years. Both tourism and the land-based sector are key elements within Herefordshire's economic portfolio.
- Developing and implementing a Food Festival fringe as part of the Flavours of Herefordshire Festival
- Supporting the development of a Destination Development Partnership and Action Plan for Herefordshire

- Supporting the development of a Community Asset Transfer proposal for Hereford Buttermarket as a means of promoting local food within the city. The bid with which the partnership is connected has been invited to submit a full business proposal in 2015.
3. **Participation in strategic partnerships**, including:
- Hereford Business Board
  - The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (MLEP) tourism and environmental sub groups. Partnership members have made a substantive contribution to the two over-arching MLEP strategies: the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) and the Marches Economic Strategy.
  - The Rural and Farming Network “Rural Business Day” in Hereford in November 2014.
4. **Consultations within the sector**, including:
- The large self-catering businesses (businesses which are capable of hosting more than 20 in a self-catering capacity) which have their own special needs.
  - A consultation with local tourism associations to identify funding needs and opportunities that could be met through the next iteration of the European LEADER programme. This identified barriers to economic growth for tourism businesses, of which the most pressing was the lack of access to suitable levels of broadband in rural areas. 97% of those consulted reported problems with broadband connectivity. As a result the Partnership commissioned a consultant, David Bland of Wansdyke consultancy, to write a report on the potential for improving connectivity within Herefordshire.
5. **Rural broadband and mobile phone connectivity**
- Building on the consultant’s report, “Strategic Approaches for Better Rural Broadband in Herefordshire”, a series of meetings have taken place with members of Herefordshire Council’s “Fastershire” team concerning the efficacy and the timing of the roll-out of good broadband connectivity within the county. These are scheduled to continue in 2015 with a targeted promotional campaign of the report and its findings.
  - The Partnership submitted evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee inquiry into broadband in rural areas, held during 2014.
  - The Partnership also submitted evidence to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s consultation into “Tackling partial not-spots in mobile phone coverage”.
  - It provided a written briefing to Jesse Norman MP, for a debate he hosted within the House of Commons on rural broadband and mobile phone coverage.