

## **CHAIRMEN'S REPORT 2013**

Our post-Christmas party was held at the very beginning of the year at St Briavels Castle. It was particularly well attended, members taking the opportunity of a tour of the very historic building, not normally open to the public. It was followed by an excellent buffet lunch and members lingered for some time!

We had three further general meetings during the year, held at Bells Hotel, Wilton Court Hotel, and Dick Whittington Farm Park, with some interesting presentations on a variety of subjects including coffee-making, local butterfly habitats, The Great British Florist, the Forestry Commission.

Much of the Board's time was taken up in 2013 on the major issue of whether and how we might restructure the Association in order to make it sustainable into the future. Various discussions took place and, as an interim measure, the Board agreed that the chair, ie. Caroline, should be paid a small honorarium until such time as an ongoing solution to the running of the association can be found. Later in the year, funding was secured from CRT to engage a firm of consultants and after the appropriate tendering process, Blue Sail was taken on to produce a proposal on how we may move the Association on to a more professionally run body. An initial in depth meeting was held with the Board.

The other most significant activity undertaken towards the end of 2013 was the partnership arrangement entered into between FODDC, MCC and CRT to co-finance a PR and Marketing firm on a fixed term contract to promote our destination nationally. This is the first step in facing the reality that in the future the local councils will not be in a position to promote tourism and that we will have to do it ourselves. By the end of the year this contract was in place and work about to start.

The Scores on the Doors stars system was recognised by the Association and members agreed the proposal that all eligible establishments should in future have their scores displayed on their entry on the website. It was agreed that membership of the Association should not be open to any food business that did not attain at least 2 stars on the Scores on the Doors Scheme.

Regretfully, the Board decided to abandon the production of an App for the area. It was being financed by CRT, through MCC but it was felt that there was insufficient protection offered for our data, to allow it to be used.

The first phase of our new website was completed and already a list of improvements and additions was drawn up to form Phase 2. We started holding a further series of half day courses for members to help them with the availability section of the site. It was agreed that we should start publishing a WebNews email to members, detailing information regarding the website, upgrades, offers etc. although it was yet to be designed.

We ended the year with high hopes of the work being done by Blue Sail on the one hand, and on the other, to reaping the benefits of the work of Alexandra Marr & Associates.