



Promoting, developing and supporting tourism in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean

Chairman's Report 2019

Helen and I, as Co-chairs would like to welcome you all to the 2019 AGM and to our May members meeting. As always it is great pleasure to see you here and we are glad to be able to showcase so many of our food & drink and activity & attraction members. Please do take the time to visit their stands and have chat.

This is the formal part of the meeting, where as Co-Chairs we present our Chairman's report and Liz Marshall, our Treasurer, reports on our financial position.

Since our last AGM we have had many changes within the organisation, all of which have been necessary to secure our future in an uncertain political and financial climate.

We said goodbye to Maureen McAllistar, our Executive Director for 3 years. Maureen guided us onto a national platform and this is a legacy she leaves behind. We thank Maureen and wish her all the best in her new venture. The also said goodbye to Tim Davies and again we would like to thank Tim for his work.

We are, as always, hugely grateful to the Forest of Dean District Council for our SLA and we are pleased to announce their support for a further 3 +1 years. Fantastic news, which is not only great for the destination but rewarding as it shows that we are delivering over and above the initial expectations, that we are trusted to do so, and that this key strategic partner has faith in us as an organisation and wants to support us and our members. We would also like to thank them for their further financial support of £10,000 towards our Toll campaign. Without this we would not have been able to achieve the brilliant campaign, which Sarah will be updating us on today.

We would also like to thank our other strategic partners: The Forestry Commission for their financial contribution of £5,000 and their continued support together with the AONB, MCC, GFirst LEP and SWAC.

In December last year, we held a formal tender process and appointed two specialist marketing agencies to deliver our PR and social media – Travel Tonic and ALS Marketing. In the last 4 months, both had delivered some superb coverage and results for our area including our Tolls Campaign. We have a full date on that for you shortly.

We would like to welcome Cerys Watts in her new membership role. Cerys has been our book keeper, which she will continue to do, and has now taken on the recruitment of new members and along with John Bosley, looking after existing members.

Together with the Cotswold & West Oxfordshire tourism team we working on the *Uncover the Cotswolds* project funded by Visit Britain's Discover England fund. *Uncover the Cotswolds* gives visitors in-depth access to the wider Cotswolds and Forest of Dean, through immersive experiences around its history, culture, village life, local food and countryside; a chance for visitors to truly immerse themselves in a slice of English life. The new website has been launched with many of our members contributing fabulous new experiences. We have been involved in a number of familiarization trips, represented at ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show and next month at Explore GB, Visit Britain's flagship event in London. We would like to welcome Jo Butler here today who has been helping our members with this project and an expert in experiential travel.

It's an easy job to promote our beautiful area of the country, it's a harder job to keep up with the competition and compete in the market place, we need you our members to keep working with us not only to support our activities, but also to encourage new members to join us. To stay with us and to give us the content we need to actively provide new and exciting stories for visitors and the media.

The Board had 3 Directors step down for re-election and we welcome 3 new Directors. This has negated the need for a vote from members, as together the 6 Directors fill the spaces required for the Board. We look forward to working with the new board members in the coming year.

We are pleased to welcome new members here today and are developing plans to attract and retain members. We have taken on board the results of our recent membership survey and always open to discuss your ideas, so please talk to us. We are refocusing our approach to members meetings, based on the survey, to give you more time to talk to us and to each other.

This is an exciting time for us as an organisation and a destination. We cannot be complacent, we must continue to move forward and build on the strong foundation of membership and activity. We rely on you to work with us and support us; we are here for our members and for the destination. We remain committed to doing our absolute best to build on the hard work of the past and to create a sustainable future for all of us.

Thank you

Yvette Farrell and Helen O'Kane
Co-Chairs