

Bala & Penllyn Tourism Association Meeting 10 September 2014

Minutes

Wednesday 10th September. Plas yn Dre, 7pm.

Attending: Melanie Williams-Chairman, Ray Hind-Treasurer, Katrina Le Saux-Secretary, Nerys Pritchard -Mary Jones World. Jack Reeves, Stella Welch, Stephanie and Toby Hickish, Sioned Llewellyn.

Apologies: Dave Mitchell, Olwen Davies, Dorothea Evans.

Chairman's Report- see attachment. (and get your hankies at the ready).

Treasurer's Report- see attachment.

It was decided, by a show of hands, to advertise, once again, in next year's Snowdonia Mountains and Coasts Brochure.

There is a meeting of Gwynedd Economic Partnership, 2nd October in Glaslyn room, Porthmadog Leisure Centre. Stephanie Hickish may be able to attend on behalf of the Tourism Association.

Nerys Pritchard from Mary Jones World gave a short informative talk. There is to be a celebration procession from Capel Tegid on 5th October, 12.30pm to Llanycil. 5.30pm there is to be an open service in Capel Tegid. The centre is to be open from 6th October-31st October everyday, 10am-4pm. The centre will then close and reopen April 1st 2015.

Other Notices:

Innes talk 6pm Christ Church, Bala.

Tickets available from Awen Merion or Katrina (01678 521782) after 23rd September.

Late Night Shopping 4th December.

Dydd Gwyl Dewi, 28th February 2015.

Treasurer's Report

Based on the last statement, the bank balance is £2,561. Taking into account committed funds (VisitBala upgrade) the balance will be £811.

Potential future Commitments:

- Snowdonia Mountains & Coast brochure advert (£300)
- Reprinting Trails leaflets.

Marketing Report

The VisitBala web platform is being updated for the following reasons:

- The existing platform is now not fully supported
- It is not compatible with mobile devices, such as smartphones & tablets
- A number of issues, e.g. members are unable to load images
- In addition the look needs updating.
- Volunteers of Association updating VisitBala & GoBala would use the same system which is more user-friendly.

We have funding for this updating but not for extra functionality, therefore we are inviting sponsors. It will cost £200 and sponsors will appear on the homepage of the website with a link for at least 3 years. So far we have 3 potential sponsors.

We propose to renew the advert in Snowdonia Mountains & Coast brochure at a cost of £300.

Chairman's Report September 2014

Dear Members

As you know, the tourist information centre in Bala has closed. Now the only provision for tourism information about activities etc is in the Leisure Centre, leaflets and Mana shop in town. There is no single place or person to help tourists or local people who want access to information. There is no intention by the County Council to fund any tourism information service in Bala. There are various 'pots' of grant money and support to set up things like volunteering groups etc. Mantell Gwynedd and Gwynedd Council officers are aware that there has been discussion and are eager to help bring the proposal below to fruition. Mari Williams (Henblas) and I as your Chairman have come up with some proposals for consideration by the 'Pum Plwy Penllyn' Group. This is in the hope that they may consider taking on the TIC. See below:

Motion: The proposal is, because the 'Pum Plwy Penllyn' are already a Ltd Company they have the structure in place to potentially employ a tourism officer for Bala. The officer would be located in the 'Glyn Room' at Henblas. This is a central and convenient place where many are passing i.e., walking from the car parks to the town. It would be an addition to brighten the busy centre and a valuable service to the town. As Chair of the Tourism Group I have said I would be willing to do the paperwork and research for potential grants but that the proposals go in the name of Company PP Penllyn because we lack the framework to do so. i.e., as volunteers we do not wish to become a Ltd Company, employ staff etc., Ideally this would be a full-time job, or if part-time that person would have the task of creating a group of volunteers eager to help out. A presence in the 'Glyn Room' would be necessary during the opening hours of the Centre at all times. Tourism causes a split of opinion in this area, with some people seeing it as harmful or that it endangers the Welsh culture. The reality is that this area needs to take advantage of our unique culture to attract people to the area, keep them here longer, be persuaded to stay and use the local resources and spend their money here. More and more farms are diversified, they have converted their farm buildings into holiday cottages. Hotels and cafes of the town have been badly affected because of the recession over the past few years. As things improve gradually, a boost is needed to ensure customers and guests stay and strengthen the economy. There is a definite need for this exciting job which would bring many elements together. It is an opportunity to create a brand image for the area on our own terms -we ensure that the area will be introduced as a Welsh area and use those elements as a strength to create a unique campaign that pull all everything together. It is an opportunity to ensure that the messages about the area be reported in a local voice, to ensure bilingualism and ensure marketing campaigns convey the richness of the area. It is also an opportunity perhaps to change the attitude of 'us and you' that exists within the world of tourism in the area, working together to create a dynamic, important role.

Potential elements to the post:

- Be a 'face' (a real person) in the area who will respond to queries of all kinds - a first clear point of contact that everyone can refer anyone needing information whether activities, accommodation, restaurants etc.

- Dynamic person who would be pro-active in joint working with businesses, cafes, hotels, caravan parks, activity centres etc., to create attractive packages to visitors who come to the area. It may be a 'Weekend Ticket' which is a package of activities for different groups - young people, stag groups, families etc.
- They could be a point of contact if a local business offer a special promotion or lastminute rooms to fill.
- Update and maintain website VisitBala.org and GoBala.org. There is a constant work to do to ensure that these are updated and the information on it is accurate and up to date. At the moment the burden lies on few volunteer members who are active within the tourism group. There is a need to ensure that literature and information is available bilingually as well.
- Take bookings and find suitable accommodation. A Commission of 10% of the accommodation price could be charged for offering this service.
- A system could be developed where businesses such as local activity centres also pay a Commission for being promoted by the Centre.
- St David's day Festival is an event that will continue after its great success last year. This person could be involved in the preparation and coordination of that event as it was a great occasion for local people and those visiting on the day. Again, this is a burden on the tourism group, with a handful of volunteers active.
- Can membership of the Tourism Group provide a potential income? The group could offer varying levels of membership that determines how much attention and promotion they have e.g. pay to be at the top of the accommodation list, are promoted on the social media, a place to display their leaflets etc
- The officer would be able to be responsible for bringing groups of volunteers together to staff the Centre. Create an active group of local volunteers to run the place.
- The officer could charge a commission to local arts/craftspeople for selling their work
- With the right person, they could arrange events, train/boat trips, a barbecue/history trips etc to create excitement and ensure that there is diversity available to fit all types of visitors and make sure they stay here longer and better still, come back next year.

It would be paramount when creating a post like this that the town takes ownership to thwart the view that tourism is run by and for the benefit of those who have migrated to the area. It is an opportunity to create excitement and offer a service that is not available at present. It is an opportunity to impress on visitors that this is a location where they can receive help and guidance to make the most of their stay when they return year after year.

It is an opportunity to convey 'our story' rather than following the often portrayed stereotypical view of Wales used presently within the tourism industry.

There are many developments happening at the moment - world of Mary Jones, the railway development etc. Llanuwchllyn Church. A job such as this would neatly and effectively provide a focus and packaging for all the various elements and diversity we have in Penllyn.

Mel Williams - Chair Bala & Penllyn Tourism Association & Mari Williams
(Henblas) 05-09-14

The brand new banners have gone up in the town as you will have seen the feedback has been very positive. Comments that the town looks more welcoming, brighter and altogether more alive. I have spoken to the Town Council and they have agreed to take ownership of the banners i.e., they will take them down etc.,

I have negotiated with Mid Wales Tourism & North Wales Tourism to get a discount for you all should you choose to be a member of both areas. i.e., join one and get 10% off the other membership. Every little helps!

I should like to announce that I will be retiring from the job as Chairman in the New Year 2015. Ray Hind is also retiring as Treasurer. and Webmaster. We have both given the last 5 years to volunteering for you together with Katrina your Secretary. An email was sent to all members as you will recall asking for volunteers for the position of Treasurer. Hazel Price has volunteered to take on the role and you will be able to vote her in if you so choose at the AGM in January. So you all need to be thinking whether you are now up for giving the group some of your expertise. We all have different things to offer and the group needs some new input.

I hope you have all had a busy and prosperous season. Many thanks for your support.
All best wishes
Mel 10/9/14