

Teesdale Marketing

Annual General Meeting 25th March 2008 for presentation of Annual Accounts 2006-07 and receipt of Chairman's Report 2008

Chairman's Report 2008

The main influences on Teesdale Marketing's activities this year, as well as the view of the future, have been the start of the Visioning exercise, the development of the County Durham Tourism Partnership (CDTP) and the decision to replace the district council with a Durham County-wide unitary authority as from April 2009.

Barnard Castle Vision is still in its early stages. The links between Teesdale Marketing (TML) and the Visioning are strong. Both myself and David Blackie are on the Visioning board and, as is common in an area of such small population, there are a number of people who's activities include both bodies including Anne Allan and Sue Berresford. With its all-encompassing brief, the Visioning will obviously have a major effect on the activities of TML and, as I mentioned a year ago, we have to be prepared to react to changing circumstances.

Similar reaction is required with the demise of the district council without whom there would not have been the partnership working that's resulted in such success for TML over the last decade. Such change obviously creates uncertainties. The unitary authority has yet to come into being and define its objectives and strategies. How TML works within the new framework has yet to be seen.

One major concern is that the new authority's objectives might not include Teesdale as one of its priorities and the marketing and support network that we've developed with the district council could suffer or cease to exist. But however much this appears as a challenge, it also presents opportunities. After all, it was the lack of resources of such a small district council that caused the creation of TML in the first place and such a vacuum resulting from the unitary authority's possible approach would necessitate similar action.

Therefore, it is imperative that we have the views of TML's members and encourage ever greater involvement in our economic activities.

It's gratifying to note how seriously TML has been taken over the last few years. The funding for our activities continued after the end of the Market Towns Initiative programme coming uniquely directly through the company enabling us to manage and develop the Teesdale Skills Development Programme, Discover Teesdale, the Local Food and Produce initiative (including the farmers' market) and Events Promotion.

Taking these in turn:

- The Skills Programme has enabled the training of over 200 people in the last two years. When including match funding, this is equivalent to around £150,000 being spent on training as a result. The training undertaken has been very diverse, ranging from the more regular courses related to IT, building and health/beauty to more unusual courses such as bat conservation, sheep shearing and cattle hoof trimming. Through the training support which has been available through our very successful

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Skills Development Programme, 22 new businesses have been started in the dale and these new businesses have provided jobs for 32 local people.

- Discover Teesdale is working closely with the County Durham Tourism Partnership (CDTP) to promote County Durham at trade shows as a visitor destination and TML also has representatives attending each of the 3 CDTP Forums: Events, Attraction Group and Tourism. The Discover group continues to promote Teesdale and has recently distributed 70,000 promotional leaflets to accommodation providers in Cumbria, County Durham and Yorkshire for their bedroom browsers, and is obtaining significant PR for Teesdale through a feature in Virgin Trains Hotline Magazine and a similar feature in Living North magazine. The group is also working closely with Northern Media in its quest to provide north east locations for film companies, has conducted many successful familiarity visits (FAMs) for the travel trade and has produced the much-heralded Bill Bryson podcasts. Two recent and very significant successes of the FAMs have been the inclusion of Teesdale in the 2009 travel brochures of 2 travel trade/niche market operators. **John Martin Coaches** will feature a Teesdale holiday in their 2009 brochure being published in May; **Mountain Goat** are putting a 3 day tag onto their Lake District holiday AND including a 7 day holiday based at the Teesdale Hotel in Middleton-in-Teesdale. Both operators were unaware of the delights of Teesdale until their FAMs. Teesdale District Council is an active member of the Discover Teesdale team and obviously, with the district council finishing, challenges include ensuring that the tourism work undertaken by the district council continues and that Teesdale continues to maintain its tourist information centres.
- The FARMA Accredited farmers' market has become self-sustaining and is managed by a forward-looking and creative stallholder management group with support from TML. The market has picked up further awards, expanded to 30 stalls and is held up as an example of good and successful practice throughout the region. Other food initiatives include a new Eat Teesdale website, the Eat Teesdale lamb campaign following last year's FMD outbreak, supporting farm visits for schools as part of the Year of Food and Farming, working with Bowes Museum on two food festivals and working in partnership with UTASS, Teesdale School and other active bodies to promote the production and use of local products. TML also supports the work of other local community organisations by loaning them the market stalls for their events including Middleton-in-Teesdale local producers' market and Cockfield Community Summer Fundraising event for their Christmas Lights .
- Two events guides have been produced and distributed over the last year with the help of Teesdale Village Halls Consortium and the last guide is the largest so far. TML is also working with the Meet committee, assisting with the cost of the 2009 calendar and Barnard Castle historical book, distributing Meet programmes into accommodation and with the general objective of making the Meet self-sustaining.

TML is now in its eleventh year in its objective of helping to create economic opportunities for the people and businesses of Teesdale. This work, largely voluntary or in personal time without expenses, results in a stronger local economy which, in turn, generates wealth, increases choice and personal prosperity, creates opportunities and generally improves the attractiveness of the dale as a place to live, work and visit.

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Overall circumstances mean that uncertainty will continue until the Visioning exercise matures and the new unitary authority is in place and makes clear its intentions. In the meantime, it's important that the delivery skills, experience and enthusiasm of the activists within Teesdale Marketing are not allowed to dissipate due to a lack of a clear future.

So the challenge is to continue discussions with the Visioning to ensure that there are the local resources to help deliver that vision as well as work closely with the emerging unitary authority to ensure that Teesdale has its share of representation.

We've always recognised that TML has to be open to change to meet the significant opportunities for Teesdale ahead. Teesdale Marketing doesn't exist for its own sake - rather for the economic benefit of the Dale and its residents - and it will be interesting to see what shape TML comprises, and how it can help with developments in Teesdale, in twelve months from now.

W J Oldfield
Chairman