

WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRY TOURISM ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10TH MARCH 2009 AT THE GUILDHALL, SANDWICH

Present: 13 Members as recorded in Attendance Book – Jon Iveson in the Chair

1. Apologies for absence received from: Annette McPherson (WCCTA Chairman, recovering from recent operation), Number One GH, Jenny Kemp (National Trust), Hardicot House, Tours of the Realm, Tracey Ward (Sandwich TC), Dover Town Council, Michael & Gloria Morgan (No.4 Cliffe House), Steve Lang (English Heritage - represented at this meeting by his colleague Phillipa Sims), Rachel Bushell (Port of Dover - N.B. Rachel also sent her apologies for non attendance at the General Meeting held on 02.12.08 but this was not recorded) and Christine Clear (Independent).

2. MINUTES OF AGM 2008

It was proposed by Terry Sutton, seconded by Patrick Williams and passed unanimously that the minutes of an Annual General Meeting held on 26th February 2008 at Dover Town Council offices, having been circulated to all members, be approved and adopted as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR PAST YEAR

Jon Iveson (DDC) said he is deputising for Annette McPherson (WCCTA Chairman) who regretted her absence but is unable to attend due to her recent operation. On Annette's behalf Jon gave a resume of activities undertaken by the Association since the last AGM:

- (i) Financial support given to the production of a promotional video of the district now up and running on the web sites and at the VIC. Further footage will be added to the video in the coming months.
- (ii) Financial support of the innovative Visit Kent's "Greeters" programme (based on Big Apple Greeters, New York) being rolled out across the district this year (the only WCC town failing to contribute to this scheme is Deal).
- (iii) WCCTA funded attendance at last year's Kent Travel Show and will do so again this year.
- (iv) Successfully applied to DTC for a grant to employ Horace Holyer as a distributor of tourism information in the Market Square during the cruise season – this action will be repeated this year and the Chairman is also applying to DTC for a grant towards the free provision of a shuttle bus service to ferry passengers to and from the Sea Front during the two days of the Dover Regatta (Train Station – Town Centre - Sea Front).

Jon concluded his report by saying that Annette has again worked extremely hard during the year for both the Association and for local tourism in general and expressed particular thanks for her work in minutely proof reading all advertisements included in the White Cliffs Country brochure – a vital task she undertakes each year. Jon asked for any comments from the floor.

Richard Mahoney (White Cliffs Boat Tours) said he felt that new ideas he has come up with in the past have not been given due consideration by the Association and felt that the Chairman and executive should be more pro-active. Jon replied that it was not in the Chairman's remit to make any individual decision and that any suggestion from a member if presented through the Chairman is put before the executive for full discussion and if practical, financially viable and legal, will be adopted if it is thought to be of benefit to the general membership and to the whole area. Dave Atkins (Dover Transport Museum) said that he has always found the WCCTA Chairman and executive to be most helpful and supportive of the Transport Museum. Debbie Dainton (Dover VIC) reported that a Tourism Newsletter is being distributed which will include information on WCCTA's future projects. Roger Walkden suggested that any perceived problems may be due to lack of communication. Jon wound up this part of the discussion by saying that any member is entitled to submit detailed ideas for consideration by the executive and ideas thus submitted have been adopted and put into operation in the past.

Richard suggested that the Association's constitution may be outdated. Jon said he would arrange for Richard to receive a copy of the constitution and if he felt that any change was necessary he should send his suggested amendments to the Chairman for discussion by the executive.

In answer to a query as to why Deal is not supporting the "Greeters" programme Trevor Bond (Ramada, Dover) who is a member of Deal TC said he believed it was due to Visit Kent's lack of response to certain questions raised after its presentation on the subject. It was proposed that Visit Kent be asked to again approach Deal TC and ask for reconsideration of its decision on this matter.

4. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Bank balances as at 31st December 2008: Current Account £879.69; Reserve Account: £3,107.75. Jon said it is in the interests of the Association that a balance is maintained between income and expenditure each year, leaving a reserve fund available for any unexpected financial circumstances. In the year to 31st December 2008 income totalled £6,529.25 against expenditure of £5,649.56, thus leaving the finances of the Association in a healthy position with resources to undertake projects in the coming year.

5. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Jon reported that all current executive members are prepared to continue in office for the coming year and have been duly nominated and seconded – no new nominations have been received. It was therefore proposed by Marlene Burnham, seconded by Dave Atkins and passed that the Executive for 2009 will be: Chairman – Annette McPherson; Treasurer - Keith McPherson; Executive members - Tracey Ward (Sandwich TC); Patrick Williams (SeaFrance); Terry Sutton (The Dover Society/Independent); Jenny Kemp (The National Trust); Marlene Burnham (Deal Town Council); Rachel Bushell (Port of Dover); Steve Lang (English Heritage).

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Roger Walkden reported on the launch of the new LD Lines cross channel service to Dieppe. Roger said he is in contact with Nick Stevens of LD Lines regarding the production of leaflets for distribution to the French extolling the virtues of Dover, its attractions and its businesses. The leaflets would be in French and Roger is currently seeking funding for this project – he anticipates that some of the businesses and attractions advertised in the leaflets would make a financial contribution to the production costs which he estimates to be approximately £10,000 initially. Roger said he will be approaching the WCCTA executive for support in due course.

Debbie Dainton said that DDC is currently having translations prepared for the web sites in both Italian and German, with French to follow later. She warned Roger that getting professional translations is an expensive operation. Jon said that the internet is proving a more effective tool for advertising than leaflets – a much wider audience is reached. Trevor Bond suggested that Dutch is also a language that should be considered for inclusion in any translation exercise. Roger said that LD Lines is enthusiastic about promoting White Cliffs Country on its side of the Channel, especially while the current Euro exchange rate remains advantageous, and hopes to send a representative to explore visitor attractions and businesses in and around Dover – such a representative will need a knowledgeable escort, plus accommodation and sustenance.

Roger raised the question of the reintroduction of a Dover tour bus during the coming season. Jon said that he is in process of approaching various companies for estimates of cost (including Dover Transport Museum). The route would be similar to previous years. Roger suggested the route be extended to include smaller attractions such as Crabble Corn Mill and Dover Transport Museum but it was generally agreed that the time factor would not allow for such an extension – no more than one hour round trips are feasible given the current information on visitor patterns.

Richard raised the possibility of some sort of attractions passport scheme being introduced for tourists whereby one ticket at a set price could be purchased to allow entry into a number of local attractions. This idea was discussed although it has been raised in the past and found to be inoperable. Debbie Dainton said that it was financially non-viable due to the complicated administration problems involved in any such scheme. Richard said he still maintained such a scheme would be possible if someone could come up with the right way of instituting and running it. Jon said that it would considerably help the tourist industry in Dover if more businesses and attractions could be persuaded to accept the euro.

Trevor Bond said he was disappointed that when attending various tourist exhibitions he has found that White Cliffs Country and Kent in general is very poorly represented with little information/literature being available for distribution. He asked that an effort should be made at this year's Ostend exhibition and Jon said he would discuss this with Trevor after the meeting as he felt it was a matter for DDC rather than WCCTA.

Mike McFarnell said that with the present euro exchange rate it would be interesting to investigate comparative shop prices of food and goods between here and the continent. After discussion it was agreed that too many variables are involved to gauge any meaningful results from such a survey and that local supermarkets are constantly adjusting prices to reflect changes in customers' requirements whether they be local or tourists.

Mike asked if the video currently on the DDC web site is also up on YouTube – this being an excellent outlet for promotion. Jon replied that he would ensure that this is done forthwith.

There being no further business Jon thanked Sandwich TC for its hospitality and closed the meeting.

Future General Meetings 2009: 14th April – Dover Town Council Offices
26th May – Goodnestone Park Gardens
6th October – Dover Castle (?)
8th December – Deal Town Hall (?)