

WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRY TOURISM ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH JUNE 2008 AT GOODNESTONE PARK GARDENS

Present: 17 members as recorded in Attendance Book – Annette McPherson in the Chair.

1. Apologies for absence received from: Tracey Ward (Sandwich Town Council), Dover Restover, St. Martin's and Ardmere, Pines Gardens, Tours of the Realm.

2. **MINUTES OF LAST GENERAL MEETING**

It was proposed by Terry Sutton, seconded by Jon Iveson and passed unanimously that the minutes of a General Meeting held on 8th April 2008 be approved and adopted.

3. **MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM**

A question was raised as to whether any progress has been made in response to the point raised by Ray Haines (Chamber of Commerce) regarding the replacement of the "White Cliffs Country" branding by "Dover District Tourism" (as recorded at Minute 6, para 2). Ray said that although there has been no official change in policy so far as he is aware he is nonetheless pleased to see that the word "Dover" is being more positively featured in DDC current advertising.

4. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Treasurer reports that the Association's current funds total £6,189.51. The Chairman said that although this total shows the Association's finances to be at a healthy level it must be remembered that the total is inflated by £1,500 – this being the amount donated by Dover Town Council for Horace Holyer's employment this year and which will not be paid out until after Horace's employment period ends.

All outstanding accounts have been settled: Horace's 2007 employment (£1,287.41), DDC Dynamic Video (£1,950 – last year's major project) and WCCTA's contribution to the DDC brochure launch (£24.95). Most of this year's subscriptions have been received and total £2,365.00. Annette went on to say that by the next General Meeting to be held in September the Executive expect to be able to propose new projects for consideration by the membership.

5. **£4M. GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Following on from the questions raised at the last General Meeting (as recorded at Minute 4) Jon Iveson was asked to give further information on the subject. He said that the £4m government funding is subject to bidding. £2.5m is already earmarked for improvements to Dover Castle. This amount will be match-funded by English Heritage. £1.5m will be bid for by Kent County Council in partnership with DDC to be used for a proposed integrated transport system for Dover – such a system would have to be well researched by appropriate consultants to ascertain what is practical and financially viable. Ray Haines said that it is encouraging to know that English Heritage is supporting efforts being made to regenerate Dover to the degree that it is now enthusiastically supporting the proposed hotel project for the Western Heights, a project which it previously opposed. He went on to say that although it will take time he believes that the future looks very good indeed for Dover. It was proposed by Terry Sutton (Dover Society) that a letter be sent to Lord Bruce-Lockhart, Chairman of English Heritage, with a copy to the Chief Executive, Dr. Simon Thurley, asking what plans EH

has for the development and improvement of facilities at Dover Castle should the total of £5m fall to its disposal.

6. **DISABLED ACCESSIBILITY**

Debbie Dainton (Dover VIC) reported that Visit Britain has recently carried out an extensive disability review which has resulted in accommodation proprietors being asked to provide an Access Statement for their premises. With this information available guests will be able to decide whether the accommodation meets their needs. Debbie said that in the UK there are 10 million disabled people, 2.7 million of whom travel regularly – they always book in advance and return on a regular basis. The VB review recognises all types of disabilities, not just the physical. Jane Langstaff (Deal & Walmer Chamber of Trade) said that she has discovered through her research that it is not only disabled access that requires to be examined by businesses, both accommodation and others such as shops, but also their personal attitudes to people with disabilities.

Debbie said that further information on this subject is available for members to take away today and she undertook to contact all accommodation providers in the district to make them fully aware of what is required. It was suggested that WCCTA should organise a meeting for members to which a qualified person should be invited to explain the new Access Statement requirements and its implications, and it was agreed that such a meeting should be organised for the Autumn. Jane Langstaff suggested that businesses that prove to meet the standards required be given a special WCCTA sticker to display on their premises. This may encourage more people to make the necessary efforts and could be unique to the White Cliffs area. Ray Haines fully endorsed this proposal.

7. **DAYS OUT**

Debbie Dainton handed around copies of the new “Days Out” leaflet. Jon explained that this leaflet, together with the accommodation leaflet, is much cheaper to produce than the main brochure and can thus be widely distributed, leaving the main brochure to be sent on application only. Jon said that next year’s leaflets are already being researched and it is hoped to issue them in several languages.

Jane Langstaff said that a pictorial CD for Deal and Sandwich has been produced and is available at £4.99.

Further information at www.thebestofdealandsandwich.co.uk/welcome.html - it can be purchased for £4.99. Debbie reported that the White Cliffs country CD is now up on the screen at Dover VIC.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Patrick Williams (SeaFrance) reported that an additional ferry to the company’s fleet will be arriving on 3rd July – larger and with improved facilities. Patrick also said that SeaFrance is supporting the Marine Conservation Society and has undertaken to clean up a beach between Kingsdown and Deal twice per year.

Trevor Bond (Ramada Hotel) said he attended the travel exhibition in Ostend again this year and is convinced, as he has intimated at previous meetings, that this is an exhibition at which White Cliffs Country should be represented. Jon said that at present DDC is unable to provide leaflets in the required languages but this is now under review and the situation will be looked at again in the coming year. Trevor said that if WCCTA or DDC cannot afford to attend Ostend then at least Visit Kent or some other Kent exhibitor could be asked to take some of our promotional material for display – he said that those attending the Ostend exhibition showed a lot of interest in Kent and its visitor attractions and he felt opportunities are being lost.

Jon said he has recently been approached by Visit Kent with a proposal that a “meet and greet” scheme similar to that being employed by Thanet Greeters (a copy of its information was passed around the table) be introduced into White Cliffs Country. This is a voluntary scheme intended to help visitors get around the district. The scheme is public transport driven. Visitors make contact two weeks before arrival and say what they want to see or do and are then met by a person with the appropriate knowledge to impart. Visit Kent has money available to put into this scheme and Dover, Deal and Sandwich Town Councils will be invited to make a contribution.- Dover District Council is in full support. Jon said he is now asking members whether WCCTA will be prepared to make a contribution. Enough money is needed to set the scheme up i.e. website, leaflets etc. Debbie said that it is also aimed at new residents to the District. A meeting is to be held at Deal Town Hall on 25th July at 6.30 p.m. to give further information to prospective greeters. Terry Sutton proposed, and was unanimously supported, that WCCTA would support the scheme in principle and that a decision on any financial contribution would be taken at the next Executive meeting.

Roger Walken distributed literature on The Green Footprint Group (a Young Enterprise Company) formed by seven students at the Dover Grammar School for Boys. This group has designed and produced its own environmentally friendly re-usable carrier bag. It has already won the South East finals of the international Young Enterprise Company competition and will now attend the finals at the Park Lane Hotel, London on 14th/16th July. A letter of thanks from Jack Williams of the GFG team for local support received was read out by Roger. More information can be obtained on thefg@hotmail.co.uk.

Terry Sutton said that on 10th July the arrival of the liner “Carnival Splendour” will be celebrated by an event organised by Dover Lions on the Prince of Wales Pier, starting at 7.00 p.m.

Dave Atkins (Dover Transport Museum) said that the Museum is struggling to find volunteers for special events in and around the area.

Dave said that more and bigger cruise liners are visiting Dover but he has noticed that, particularly on Sundays, there is a lack of things for the passengers to do in Dover – many shops do not open on Sundays and he felt more should be encouraged to do so. A general discussion ensued as to how cruise passengers could be persuaded to stay in Dover rather than go on organised coach trips away from the town. It was agreed this is a difficult situation as cruise companies are keen to make money from their organised trips and actively discourage individual activities. Dave said, and it was agreed, that the only sure way to improve the situation is to get to the passengers before they disembark but this has proved almost impossible despite past efforts.

It was further agreed that Dover has much to offer as was proved when a liner unexpectedly called at Dover last week having been diverted from Le Havre, carrying 3,000 passengers. All the stops were pulled out to welcome the passengers and DHB was very pleased with the quick response from all concerned in Dover. Debbie Dainton said that Cruise Welcome at the terminal makes great efforts to promote Dover to passengers by offering information on local attractions etc. – Suzie Borley (Sondes Lodge) felt that perhaps the Cruise Welcome could be more pro-active in its role at the terminal.

If members wish to promote any local events Jane Langstaff can offer support through facilities available on the Best of Dover, Deal and Sandwich website and will be pleased to do so.

There being no further business the meeting ended. The Chairman expressed her thanks to Lady FitzWalter for hosting today’s meeting and providing the lunch that followed.