

WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRY TOURISM ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 2ND DECEMBER 2008 AT DOVER TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES

Present: 17 members as recorded in Attendance Book. Tracey Ward in the Chair.

Tracey advised the meeting that Michael Krayenbrink (Port of Dover) has apologised for cancelling his visit to address this meeting today but said he will schedule a date for attending a general meeting early in the New Year.

1. Apologies for absence received from Annette McPherson (Chairman, WCCTA), Jon Iveson (DDC), Jenny Kemp (National Trust), Jane Langstaff (Best of Dover, Deal and Sandwich), Number One Guest House and Hardicot Guest House.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST GENERAL MEETING

With reference to Minute 9 (AOB) Dave Atkins (Dover Transport Museum) wishes to make it clear that the bus mentioned therein and driven by him belongs to Classic Omnibuses and not to Dover Transport Museum.

It was proposed by Terry Sutton, seconded by Marlene Burnham and passed unanimously that the minutes of a general meeting held on 23rd September 2008 be approved and adopted.

3. MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM

Dave Atkins said he has noticed that some items mentioned at the last General Meeting have been reported in the local press and felt this was positive promotion for the Association and suggested that details of general interest emanating from WCCTA meetings should be released for public consumption. Dave's suggestion was backed by the majority of members present and Tracey said she would advise Annette McPherson of their wishes. (Later in the meeting Terry Sutton volunteered to prepare press releases as appropriate and to submit them to the Chairman for approval before offering them to the local press. Terry was thanked for his offer.)

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

On behalf of the Treasurer Tracey reported that all financial commitments to date have been paid – these include Horace Holyer's employment, the Dynamic Video and WCCTA's contribution to the Greeters' scheme. Bank balances as at today's date are: Current Account £879.69; Reserve Account £3,098.86. In answer to a question from the floor Tracey said that the Executive would be discussing future plans for using surplus funds early in the New Year. Richard Mahoney (White Cliffs Boat Tours) asked if some money could be given for the production of individual small attractions flyers as these proved very useful in the past. Debbie Dainton (DDC) said that although those flyers are no longer printed DDC will produce two sets of leaflets featuring Small Museums and Days' Out which will obviously include many smaller attractions across the district. Debbie said she doubted funding would be available for reintroducing flyers as requested by Richard but she would investigate the matter further. Debbie also reported that the Dynamic Video funded by WCCTA is up on the DDC website and also showing on-screen in Dover Visitor Centre. It is hoped in future to do more filming of individual attractions across the district for inclusion in the video.

5. **LIGHT UP OPEN UP DOVER**

Tracey read a report given by Jon Iveson at the last Executive meeting: “.....the event was critically well-received and he understood that the very successful firework display on the sea front was watched by an exceptionally large crowd. Unfortunately support from the Olympic hierarchy was not impressive in respect of pre-publicising the event and DDC is talking to Dover Pride in the hope that next year organisation will be improved. Before Light Up Open Up Dover 2009 it is intended that more sites across the area will be made accessible to the public and in May next year it is intended that four historic military sites will be ready for visitors i.e. Fort Burgoyne, The Grand Shaft, Drop Redoubt and The Turret (Admiralty Pier) – this will provide tangible proof to the local population that Olympic based funding is being used to create a lasting legacy for the district.”

Debbie said her understanding is that these sites will be open initially only for the duration of the Light Up Open Up weekend. Richard Mahoney said the Grand Shaft should be open to the public all the time as it is such a popular attraction for Dover. Although several members present supported Richard’s view it was agreed that there would be too many difficulties in achieving it, both financially and in terms of providing manpower and ensuring the safety of visitors.

6. **DDC WEBSITE**

Debbie said that DDC is aware that the website has not operated as effectively as it should or could have done. Professional people have been brought in to rectify the situation and the site is currently being redesigned with a new home page, templates etc. – this is working alongside the newly installed Content Management System. It is hoped that everything will be in place in time for the launch of the 2009 White Cliffs Country campaign. Mike McFarnell stressed the importance of the ability to widely publicise local events via the website – several events of international importance will be taking place in the near future including Bleriot’s centenary. Debbie said that problems recently experienced with uploading to Englandnet and Visit Britain have been solved so hopefully it will now be easier to feed publicity for local events into the system. Trevor Bond (The Ramada) said that he hoped the new DDC website would prove more prominent on search engines as at the moment the vast majority of his business is coming via the “stayindover” site and not “whitecliffscountry”. Debbie said this aspect of the site is being addressed but it will take time for it to show improvement after the redesign is completed.

7. **WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRY GUIDE 2009**

Debbie reported that proofs of the new Guide, accommodation leaflet and Days Out leaflet were shown to hoteliers from the three towns and their feedback has been positive. The publications have gone to print and will be out early in January. In answer to a query from the floor Debbie said that she has not been able to make any evaluation of the success of last year’s publications but a White Cliffs Visitors’ Survey conducted during last year proved useful and informative and she hoped a similar survey would take place at some future date.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mike McFarnell said that the Dover Film Festival will take place on 16th and 17th February 2009. He said that he hoped the 1968 film to be shown will generate interest in organising 40th anniversary reunions for staff of several of Dover’s important industries now defunct such as Hoverspeed and Dover Engineering. Mike also said that the new Water Sports Centre will open on March 29th 2009.

Ray Haines (Dover District Chamber of Commerce) said that there can be no doubt that over the next few years the regeneration of Dover will become evident with a

consequent increase in the number of visitors attracted to the area. He said that one of his main concerns is the state and number of public conveniences in Dover – they are inadequate in number and well below an acceptable standard of cleanliness and hygiene. Ray said he fully understands that DDC has financial restrictions and difficult budget decisions to make but other towns manage to provide attractive facilities for visitors and Dover must do likewise. Ray said his intention is to get everyone possible behind his campaign to improve standards and would like WCCTA to add its weight and for those present at the meeting to make sure their companies and organisations also become involved. There can be no quick solution to the problem – it is a long term project. It was unanimously agreed that Ray's campaign should be supported by WCCTA and a letter sent to Roger Walton at DDC asking that the concerns of the tourism industry in regard to the lack of provision and poor standards of public conveniences in the district be addressed and acted upon. Tracey Ward (Sandwich Town Council) said that Sandwich public conveniences also attract complaints but as DDC has no statutory obligation to provide and/or maintain public conveniences Sandwich Town Council is itself undertaking to look after those situated on Sandwich Quay.

Marlene Burnham (Deal Town Council) said that Deal TC has a sub committee specifically formed to monitor public conveniences in the town. Business premises were canvassed as to whether they would open up their facilities for visitors – only a few were willing to do so but in general the pubs and restaurants are co-operating.

Marlene said that Deal TC pay DDC £6,000 to help keep the South Street toilets maintained and said that maybe Dover TC should be approached to help with Dover's problem as it is for the benefit of all businesses, shops and attractions that these facilities should be available and kept to a high standard of hygiene and cleanliness.

Ray Haines concluded the discussion by saying that the matter is of district wide concern and that although it will be a long-term project DDC must not be let off the hook - he appealed to all those present to persevere for as long as it takes to get a satisfactory resolution to the problem.

Bill Hamblin (DGHA) said he has received a complaint from one of his guests regarding English Heritage's closure of parts of Dover Castle – it is felt that there could be a reduction in the entrance fee as major parts of the Castle cannot be accessed – also the restricted access is not being advertised to the public. It was suggested that Bill contact Stephen Lang, Head Custodian of the Castle to voice his concerns.

Trevor Bond (The Ramada) raised the question of disability access to accommodation premises across the district. He said he was surprised to learn that The Ramada has the only fully accessible facilities in the district. Debbie said that DDC is aware of this problem and it is in her future plans to look into what can be done to encourage upgrading of facilities where feasible – some funding is available.

Marlene Burnham said that the new Deal Pier Restaurant is now open seven days a week up until 11.00 p.m. and will cater for parties etc.

Roger Walkden reported that the Dover Loyalty Scheme has folded due to lack of support from the businesses involved and from the card carrying public. He said he was disappointed that the scheme has failed but he still has a database of 16/1700 e-mail contacts and is happy to send out information on any local promotion or event through that means. Those present expressed their regrets that Roger has been forced to abandon the DLS and thanked him for all the effort he put into running it.

New member, Jane Martin, introduced herself to members. Jane has taken over Tours of the Realm from Denise Ryeland. The Chairman welcomed her to the Association.

Tracey closed the meeting by passing on Annette McPherson's best wishes to members for a Happy Christmas and a successful New Year.

NEXT MEETING WILL BE AN AGM – DATE AND VENUE TO BE ANNOUNCED.