

WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRY TOURISM ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER 2008 AT DOVER TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Present: 14 members as recorded in Attendance Book. Annette McPherson in the Chair.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members and thanked Dave Atkins for his hospitality in providing the facilities for today's meeting.

1. Apologies for absence received from: Trevor Bond (Ramada Hotel), Margaret Reidy (No. 1 Guesthouse), Adeline Reidy (WCHGHA), Patrick Williams (SeaFrance), Jon Iveson (DDC) and Christine Clear (Independent).

Denise Ryeland (Tours of the Realm), introduced Jane Martin to the meeting – Denise is retiring from her business - Jane is taking over Tours of the Realm and intends to remain in membership of the Association. Terry Sutton expressed the unanimous feelings of the meeting when he thanked Denise for her past commitment and support of the Association over the many years she has been a member.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST GENERAL MEETING

It was proposed by Terry Sutton (Independent/Dover Society), seconded by Dave Atkins (Dover Transport Museum) and passed unanimously that the minutes of a General Meeting held on 24th June 2008 be approved and adopted as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Total balances at the bank stand at £6,230. The Chairman said that this is a healthy balance but she drew attention to the fact that substantial funds are already committed for the coming year e.g. £500 for the "Greeters" programme, Folkestone Trade Fair and Horace Holyer's employment. Annette also proposed that when she approaches Dover Town Council for a grant to fund Horace Holyer's employment this year she should also ask if the Council would consider a grant to allow the Dover Museum tour bus to operate on the two regatta days next year. She felt that as DTC are heavily involved in this event it would welcome any action to encourage more people to attend. Dave Atkins estimates that the cost of running the bus as proposed would be approximately £350 per day and that picking-up points could usefully include Dover Priory Station. Those present agreed that this proposal should be pursued and a further discussion on the matter will take place after DTC has made its decision.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Annette reported on various letters sent on behalf of the Group during the summer recess: A letter was sent to English Heritage as proposed at Minute 5 of the last meeting. Unfortunately the Chairman of EH, Lord Bruce-Lockhart recently died but the letter has been acknowledged from the Chief Executive's office with a promise of further information at a later date. Terry Sutton said it is now known that the Dover Castle Keep will close from November 2008 for extensive renovation work. A letter sent to the Dover Express congratulating DDC on its attractive summer floral displays in the town was duly printed in an August issue of the paper.

A letter was received from the Langdon Action Group appealing for funds for its continuing opposition to the erection of wind turbines in the Langdon area: this request was fully discussed by the Executive at its last meeting when it was unanimously agreed that any financial contribution to this Action Group would not be an appropriate use of WCCTA funds.

5. **GREETERS' PROGRAMME**

Annette said that it has been agreed the Group should contribute £500 to this programme. Debbie Dainton (DDC) said that an initial meeting was held in July which was attended by prospective greeters. A steering group has been formed and it will meet on October 9th after which Debbie will be able to give a more detailed account of what is involved in the programme. At least sixteen people have expressed an interest in joining the programme as greeters – these are not professional guides but people with a wide knowledge of local history, attractions etc. Dover and Sandwich are backing the scheme but unfortunately, despite Marlene Burnham's best efforts, Deal has declined to do so.

6. **HERITAGE OPEN DAY**

Terry Sutton reported that the recent Heritage Open Days, supported by The Dover Society, proved a great success. Six sites were open in Dover and were well attended. St. Mary's Church saw 300 visitors in one day, and the Grand Shaft welcomed 200 visitors.

Tracey Ward said that the Open Days also proved successful in Sandwich where 16 sites were open

7. **CULTURAL OLYMPIAD**

Debbie said that the weekend of 26th – 28th September would see an exciting free show "Light Up, Open Up Dover" set around the harbour area. There will be a spectacular launch on the Friday night with a magnificent pyrotechnic display. The whole weekend will celebrate Dover's rich history and will recognise the Kent Campaign to welcome the Olympic torch relay into the UK through Dover. As with the recent Heritage Open Day many local attractions and venues will be open to the public. Debbie passed around leaflets advertising all that is to happen throughout the weekend but agreed that the pre-publicity was a little late in its distribution only just becoming available this week. Marlene suggested that in order to speedily reach a wider audience the local radio station should be used to advertise the event.

8. **WESTERN DOCKS DEVELOPMENT**

Terry Sutton reported that at a recent Port Consultative Committee meeting it was stressed that DHB would welcome public views on the development before planning procedures commence. At the present time various studies are being undertaken including a study on the development's likely impact on the environment.

DHB's Chief Executive has said that the present down-turn in the economy will have no affect on the Board's Western Docks development plans.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mike McFarnell expressed his view that in order for tourism to develop in the future a five-year plan is needed. Apparently there is very little forward planning being achieved in tourism at present. Next year there is to be a weekend celebrating Bleriot's achievements and we should already be publicising the centenary in 2010 of Rolls' double channel crossing by plane. Mike said he felt the area is missing out on reaching

more tourists because local events and attractions are not being promoted in a positive way and not far enough in advance for hoteliers and local businesses to take advantage of them. Terry Sutton endorsed Mike's views adding that The Dover Society has attempted to meet with DDC in regard to the Bleriot celebrations no less than three times so far without success – the only information he has gleaned on the subject has been given to him by the French! Debbie Dainton replied that DDC Tourism is well aware that the White Cliffs Country website has not performed as well as it should. She said at present the department is working with an external contractor with a view to improving the site and making it easier to locate and use – it is hoped that it will all be sorted out within the next two months.

(Since the meeting Debbie has provided a copy of her press release for entry in The Times article on Centenary Events in 2009 – it is as follows:

DOVER 2009 – Bleriot: The Celebration: On 25th July 1909 Louis Bleriot became the first person to fly the English Channel in an aeroplane. His remarkable achievement marked a watershed in aviation history and was the embodiment of the pioneering spirit of that golden age. To commemorate the centenary Dover District Council is hosting a prestigious international event – **Dover 2009** – over the weekend of 25th-26th July 2009. **Dover 2009** will feature a historic recreation of Bleriot's flight across the English Channel by the Swedish pilot Mikael Carison flying one of his two Bleriot X1 monoplanes at the vanguard of an Air Pageant commemorating 100 years of aviation. **Dover 2009** is being supported by the RAF with planned displays by, amongst others, the Red Arrows. Together with many other activities being planned **Dover 2009** will be an occasion to experience the rich history and heritage of Dover, its proud history with France, its long association with the Armed Forces, and its role as one of Europe's busiest gateways.)

The Chairman welcomed Jenny Kemp to the meeting – Jenny is the new Assistant Manager at the National Trust, Langdon Cliffs.

Dave Atkins reported that the Transport Museum attendance figures are slightly up on last year although it is still proving difficult to let the public know where the museum is situated.

Marlene Burnham (Deal Town Council) said that it is very difficult for small museums to keep going but they tried to support each other as much as possible. Deal will be having another Vintage Bus day which will involve Dover Transport Museum. Marlene reported on other up-coming events in Deal: September 22nd 2009 will see the 20th Anniversary of the IRA bombing of Deal Barracks and events are being planned to celebrate the lives of the young men who died. Next year's Deal Braderie is already being planned and it is hoped to extend it further through the town.

The Italian and French markets will continue to operate. The Timeball Tower will operate on New Year's Eve as in the past – the timeball dropping at midnight. An end of season soiree is being planned for 5.00 p.m. Sunday, 28th September at the Timeball Tower. Marlene said that it had been feared the Tower would have to be handed back to DDC because of its precarious financial situation but the local Lions have come to the rescue by volunteering to man it for three days a week which will allow the Trust to carry on. The Tower will re-open at Easter next year. On 12th October the TV programme "Cash in the Attic" will take place in Deal Town Hall (items for examination must be registered between 9.30 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. on the day). On 13th October the Mayor and civic dignitaries will be at St. George's Church to celebrate the signing of the Deal Charter.

Roger Walkden (DGHA) asked what plans are being made in regard to bringing back a tour bus to Dover. Debbie replied that a quote is being sought from the City Sightseeing company in order to obtain comparative costs. The Chairman said she is keen that investigations are made into the cost and practicalities of using the Dover Transport Museum bus – much better to use a local source than to bring in one from outside.

Dave Atkins said that he is constantly being asked if there is a bus tour around the town – the problem is to get enough people to use it to make it financially viable. Timing is a problem as some people only want a short, compact tour whereas some favour a “hop on, hop off” schedule. Roger said he would bring this matter up with DDC asking what, if any, plans are being made for a tour bus in Dover and also express to the Council this Association’s view that it favours the use of the Transport Museum bus if possible.

Jane Langstaff (Best of Dover, Deal and Sandwich/Deal & Walmer Chamber of Commerce) said she also felt that there is a lack of adequate information being made available well in advance in respect of local events and attractions. She offered to put any relevant information – can be as far ahead as 2011 - on the Best of Dover, Deal and Sandwich website which reaches both national and international users.

Tracey Ward congratulated Deal Town Council on the success of the recent street braderie, and also on the liveliness of the town in general during its music festival.

Terry Sutton said that apparently visitors to the town want to know where local churches are situated and for this information they can now go to the Christians Together web site: www.christianstogetherindover.org.uk. Terry also reported that since the Channel Tunnel accident DHB port figures have gone up considerably e.g. Freight by 34%, coaches by 61% and passengers by 25%.

Debbie Dainton said that DDC is working on several partnership initiatives with Calais about which she will give more information in due course. The White Cliffs Country brochure advertiser numbers are slightly down this year – this situation will be monitored over the next couple of years. A new Visit Britain initiative “One Stop Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe (OSSATE)” which includes the whole of Europe is being rolled out over the UK. All accommodation providers will have to give full information as to the accessibility of their premises. Debbie will be writing to local accommodation providers with further information as it becomes available.

There being no further business the meeting ended.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: 11.00 a.m. Tuesday, 25th November 2008 at Sandwich Guildhall.