

Prime Minister backs Tourism

The Prime Minister gave a speech on Thursday 12 August declaring the Government's commitment to tourism.

He outlined how tourism is now a first class priority at the front and centre of our economic strategy, as an export earner with international visitors and with a strong domestic market. He also stressed how fundamental the industry will be to the rebuilding and rebalancing of our economy.

Over the coming months the Government will be working on 'the strongest possible tourism strategy' looking at:

What the Government does nationally

The role of local government and the support of the local area

How we stimulate the private sector in tourism

How we make policy in other areas that will impact the tourism industry

At a national level, the dedicated Minister for Tourism and Heritage, John Penrose will lead a new relationship with the tourism industry. In spite of the current tough times meaning tough decisions, he is keen to ensure that these decisions will serve us in the long-term.

However, the Government views tourism as a local industry and their aspiration is for new Local Enterprise Partnerships to allow local people and entrepreneurs more responsibility and control over how tourism is developed in each local area. A new set of incentives will be proposed for local authorities – including options for business rate incentives allowing local authorities to reinvest the benefits of growth back into their local communities.

The right local incentives should also help to stimulate the private sector. In addition to the reduction in red tape and excessive business taxes planned, the Prime Minister sees tourism bids as potentially key beneficiaries of the new £1 billion regional growth fund.

He will also look across Government at the policies that impact tourism in a big way – visas, airport security, infrastructure – not as isolated issues, but from the perspective of both the domestic and international tourism industry.

Finally, he committed John Penrose to work with the industry, bringing together all your best ideas, to develop a tourism strategy by the end of the year, with the goal of setting Britain on a path to break into the world's top five tourist destinations.

The full speech can be read at www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/08/pms-speech-on-tourism-54479 - you will see that our very own West Oxfordshire even gets a mention!



New Cabinet Member for Tourism

We would like to welcome Councillor Richard Langridge

as the new portfolio holder for Tourism who is now Cabinet Member for Local Economy and Communities at the Council.

Councillor Langridge has already been out and about across the district meeting the local industry. He also attended the Oxfordshire Cotswolds Summer Networking event that was held at Eynsham Hall in July where he got to meet with and speak to over 60 local tourism businesses.

We will be working closely with Councillor Langridge to deliver the Tourism Strategy. Should you like to contact him directly you can do so at Richard.Langridge@westoxon.gov.uk or you can contact one of tourism team.

New Oxfordshire Cotswolds DVD launched

We have now launched a new promotional DVD for the Oxfordshire Cotswolds.

The DVD gives the visitor a snap shot of what the destination has to offer, enticing them to come and visit for themselves.

This will be a useful asset in marketing the area to both the domestic and overseas markets and we will be working closely with the regional and national tourist boards to promote it.



This piece of work is linked very closely to our existing tourism strategy and promoting the Oxfordshire Cotswolds brand using new and emerging technologies. Please do view the DVD for yourself and we would love to hear your feedback!

The DVD is available on YouTube and there is a link from our website: www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org

Scones and clotted cream

Witney Four Pillars Hotel (www.four-pillars.co.uk/witney) are inviting local tourism businesses to come and enjoy a complimentary afternoon tea to include sandwiches, homemade scones with clotted cream, tea and coffee and a glass of Bucks Fizz.

The open afternoon is being held on Wednesday 29 September, from 3pm - 6.30pm and is a great opportunity to meet the team at the hotel and have a tour of the facilities. It is also a great opportunity to network with other local businesses.

If you would like to attend then please reply directly to Nicola Joyce by Friday 17 September (T: 01993 779777 E: witney.salesexec@four-pillars.co.uk)

The 2011 Oxfordshire Cotswolds Visitor Guide

Work on the new guide is well underway and it will be launched at the Tourism Forum at Witney Lakes on the 10 November.

The guide is the largest piece of promotional tourism material produced by West Oxfordshire District Council and in 2011 it will have an extra 4 pages to give us even more room to promote this lovely part of Oxfordshire.

For further information please contact Diane Blackwell.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Social Media: more traffic than search engines

Social networks now receive more UK internet visits than search engines, according to industry analysts, Experian Hitwise. Facebook accounts for 55 percent of all UK social networking visits, almost three times as many as the next most popular social network, YouTube. Twitter, one of the fastest growing and most talked about websites of the last two years, is now the third most popular social network in the UK, putting it ahead of former favourites such as Bebo and MySpace

MICE Industry: most popular destinations

The USA and Germany are the most popular destinations for meetings and conventions, according to the latest worldwide rankings which have just been released by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). Spain remains in third place, with Italy moving up from 6th to 4th place and the United Kingdom remaining in 5th position. China and Austria (which shares 10th place with The Netherlands) are both newcomers in the top 10.

This year, ICCA researchers identified 8,294 events which took place in 2009, 800 events more than were identified last year and a reflection of the strength of the meetings market despite the economic downturn

Alternative Accommodation

VisitEngland has recently introduced a new quality scheme for self-catering based accommodation which is perhaps more unusual. The Alternative Accommodation scheme will include wigwams and camping pods, nomadic structures (including tipis, yurts, safari tents, ready-erected tents), railway carriages, shepherds trailers, treehouses and romany caravans.

Alternative Accommodation offers a real sense of 'getting back to nature' and is often set within a rural location. It also has a strong emphasis on sustainability with low energy and waste management initiatives.

For details on the Alternative Accommodation scheme visit the Quality in Tourism website (www.qualityintourism.com).



Double celebration for Blenheim

The Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure category at the Oxfordshire Business Awards saw all three finalists coming from the Oxfordshire Cotswolds: Witney Lakes Resort, Blenheim Palace and the tourism team here at West Oxfordshire District Council.

The three finalists were chosen from 41 nominations from across Oxfordshire for their commitment to promoting tourism,

leisure pursuits and customer focused hospitality in Oxfordshire.

The glittering awards ceremony was attended by over 450 business people from around the county and the evening ended in a double celebration for Blenheim Palace. Having already won the tourism award, they went on to scoop the most prestigious award of all - Business of the Year.

Remember, remember the 10th November

The Oxfordshire Cotswolds Tourism Forum takes place on Wednesday 10 November at Witney Lakes Resort with James Berresford, Chief Executive of Visit England, as guest speaker.

Invitations to the annual event, which brings together the local tourism industry, will be going out nearer the time but make sure the date (and time - 6pm onwards) is in your diary!



James Berresford

Green – silver & gold

Congratulations to our Visitor Information Centre in Burford, which has been awarded Silver under the Green Tourism Business Scheme - the UK's leading sustainable tourism certification scheme.

The inspector commented specifically on the amount of work done since the initial inspection, two years ago, and was particularly impressed by the enthusiasm of the team.

Improvements that have been made at the VIC include the introduction of a 'Responsible Visitor Charter' which encourages visitors to follow the centre's lead on green issues, a wider range of local and recyclable products on sale, and switching to biodegradable and recycled paper carrier bags.

Cllr Richard Langridge, the Council's Cabinet Member for Local Economy and Communities, said: "Tourism plays an important role in West Oxfordshire's



economy and our Council works hard to support and encourage this industry. We are also extremely mindful of the importance of sustainability and protecting our local environment. We are therefore delighted that Burford VIC has received the silver award. This recognises the hard work of staff who continually strive to make improvements and it is a real achievement."

Congratulations also to The Chestnuts, a self-catering property in Shilton, who have been awarded Gold! With her accommodation having already received Four Stars and a coveted Gold award for Service and Excellence under the National Quality Assurance Scheme, Chris Burton and her team are delighted. The awards certainly justify their marketing of the cottage as 'a place where luxury and sustainability meet'.

The Chestnuts (www.chestnuts.net) is run as a carbon neutral business and is a supporter of World Responsible Tourism.

Value of the Visitor Economy

A recent report states that tourism revenue has the potential to grow by more than 60% during the next decade, if challenges are met.

The in-depth 102-page study had been published by Deloitte and Oxford Economics describing the importance of tourism to the economy of the UK, providing key current metrics and forecasts for 2020.

The report, undertaken on behalf of Visit Britain, calculates that the total economic contribution is currently £115 billion a year. It predicts that if all goes well the figure is set to rise to £188 billion a year in 2020, an increase of more than 60%.

Deloitte predicts spending by overseas visitors will almost double from £16 billion now to £31 billion in 2020. These figures make tourism Britain's fifth biggest industry and third largest foreign exchange earner.

It warns that Government intervention will be the key to success because a range of market failures need to be tackled.

These include co-ordinating marketing to help small and medium sized tourist businesses who cannot afford to do it themselves, enabling rural firms who face higher costs of operating to adopt innovative technology, and supporting the many districts across the UK that rely disproportionately on tourism as an important source of jobs for entry-level and part-time workers.

The industry also needs help to improve its ability to predict what facilities will be needed for the tourists that are likely to turn up, to ensure the modernisation of hotels and venues is done in a way that retains their original appeal and authenticity and to adapt more swiftly to new trends such as the growth in older 'grey pound' tourists.

West Oxfordshire Week

West Oxfordshire Week (WOW) takes place from Monday 13 to Sunday 19 September. Now in its eight year, WOW offers local residents a week of discounted entry and special offers, while local tourism concerns get a wonderful opportunity to publicise themselves or their latest offers to every household in West Oxfordshire.

Full details of all the offers will be available from the West Oxfordshire District Council website from Monday 23 August – www.westoxon.gov.uk



Granted!

Congratulations to two of our smaller local attractions, who have both been awarded Heritage Lottery Fund grants.

Churchill & Sarsden Heritage Centre have been awarded £50,000 towards their project to update the centre and expand learning and outreach to the local community. Apart from an enhanced exhibition area, they will be able to extend their viewing with audio guide tours of relevant sites in the village.

www.churchillheritage.org.uk

Meanwhile Combe Mill has been awarded a development grant of £72,700 to conduct surveys, explore effective ways of interpreting the Victorian industrial and social heritage to a wider audience and to estimate the cost of conserving the building. Ways to improve visitor access will be looked into and specialists will examine how to repair the original Cornish steam raising boiler. This first-round pass means that they can now apply for the full £626,000 of HLF support that they are seeking for their project.

www.combemill.org

Keeping you informed

The Oxfordshire Cotswold's website is not just for visitors to West Oxfordshire. We also hope that it will prove a useful tool for our local tourism partners to keep up to date with what is going on.

The Industry pages of the website are regularly updated and full of useful information. You will find information on green tourism, accessibility, fire regulations and tourism statistics (local, regional and national); there are dates for forthcoming events like the Tourism Forum and also a number of informative downloads, including the latest Tourism Strategy and local tourism press releases.

To view the industry section just click on the 'Industry' link at the bottom left hand corner of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds home page or copy the following link to your browser www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org/industry

Take a look and if you have a press release or anything else you would like to see added to the section then please let us know.

It's not just about the towels....

VisitEngland have conducted online research in order to gauge consumer attitudes towards different types of sustainable holiday elements in England. The most appealing holiday type was one in which respondents had the opportunity to learn something about the place where they were staying - three quarters were interested in this, while over 3-in-5 said that staying in accommodation which only uses locally sourced food was appealing.

Few (13%) had stayed in hotels with green awards but 58% were potentially interested in doing this, and 51% said that if two hotels were otherwise the same they would choose the one with environmentally friendly practice. Around half said they wanted to see that they were benefiting the local community in some way. on 01235 867302 or jhowse@tourismse.com. Places are limited so booking is essential.

DIARY dates

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 16 Sept | Tourism South East (TSE) Members' Conference inc AGM and Tourism Council

Lingfield Park, Surrey

communications@tourismse.com |
| 13 - 19 Sept | West Oxfordshire Week

Various venues

chris.jackson@westoxon.gov.uk |
| 22 Sept | TSE Training – Lead, Motivate, Succeed

Culham Conference Centre, Abingdon

training@tourismse.com |
| 29 Sept | Four Pillars Open Afternoon

Witney Four Pillars Hotel
3 - 6.30pm

Nicola Joyce - 01993 779777 or witney.salesexec@four-pillars.co.uk |
| 6 Oct | TSE Training – Welcome All

Barcelo Hotel, Oxford

training@tourismse.com |
| 7 Oct | VAQAS Workshop

Blenheim Palace
10am - 12noon

Contact Diane Blackwell |
| 10 Nov | The Oxfordshire Cotswolds Tourism Forum

Witney Lakes Resort
6pm start

Contact Diane Blackwell |
| 9 Dec | Spooky Xmas BBO Networking Event

Oxford Castle
12.30 - 2.30pm

Book direct with jhowse@tourismse.com |

Spot the winner!

Only eight producers were worthy of Gold at the Guild of Fine Foods Great Taste Awards 2010 for their fresh pork.

Congratulations to team at Foxbury Farm, who were one of those eight, being awarded the gold for their Gloucester Old Spot Loin of Pork. The judges commented "Looks great, crackling looks amazing, smells great, cracking is stupendously good".

Farmer and owner Colin Dawes said "the close to perfect" star rating awarded by The Guild of Fine Foods highlights the quality of the meat we rear at Foxbury Farm. It goes without saying animals that live free-range and without stress are not only happier, the meat tastes better for it."

www.foxburyfarm.co.uk



Networking at Eynsham Hall

The summer networking event proved a great success. Over 60 people, representing local tourism concerns both large and small, enjoyed a warm summer's afternoon/early evening in the wonderful setting of Eynsham Hall.

Other than a brief welcome to our new portfolio holder for Tourism, Councillor Richard Langridge, and the launch of our Oxfordshire Cotswolds DVD, the time was spent in lively networking.

Furnished Holiday Lettings rules

In the recent Budget, the Chancellor, The Rt. Hon. George Osborne MP, reiterated that FHL rules are to be reinstated for 2010/11. Consultation will take place over the summer to ensure that tax rules comply with EU legal requirements.

Wychwood Forest Fair

The Visitor Information Centres will be manning a stall at the Forest Fair and look forward to seeing you there.

The Forest Fair takes place at Southdown Farm, Crawley Road, Witney, OX29 9TG on Sunday 5 September.

The fair runs from 11am till 5pm, with entry £6 (under 16s free) and free parking

A few statistics...

The first seven months of 2010 have seen unique visitors to the Oxfordshire Cotswolds website (www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org) rise by over 10% from the corresponding period last year.

Average visit duration has also risen to over 4 minutes and more than 30,000 PDFs have been downloaded from the website - with walks and cycle rides proving particularly popular.

For more information contact Chris Jackson.

West Oxfordshire District Council Tourism Team

Hayley Beer

Tourism Services Manager
hayley.beer@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861561

Chris Jackson

Tourism Development Officer
chris.jackson@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861563

Diane Blackwell

Tourism Development Officer
diane.blackwell@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861553

Vivienne Stobo

Senior Visitor Information Centre Supervisor (Burford & Woodstock)
vivienne.stobo@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861780

Sandie Hunter

Visitor Information Centre Supervisor (Witney)
sandra.hunter@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 775802