

TOURISM FORUM
Tuesday, 3rd October, 2006

Present:- Kevin Saville (Carlton Park Hotel) (in the Chair);

Councillor S. Walker	RMBC
Anne Grayson	RiDO
Dawn Beresford	Carlton Park Hotel
Brian King	Rotherham Civic Society
Ian Dixon	Rother Valley Country Park
Elaine Humphries	Friends of Clifton Park
Joanne Edley	Tourism Officer, RMBC
Richard Jones	Destination Management Partnership Organisation
Karen Oliver	Tourism Services, RMBC
Clare Warsop	Rotherham Tourism
Ann Holland	Throapham House Bed and Breakfast Hotel
Robert Holland	Throapham House Bed and Breakfast Hotel
Mike Garnock Jones	Rotherham Ready
Jovan Maric	Music Factory Entertainment Group

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor I. St. John	Cabinet Member, Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure
Joanne Wehrle	Partnership Officer (Regional Affairs), RMBC
Stan Crowther	Rotherham Civic Society
Charles Tucker	Dearne Valley Ramblers
Ted Kelsey	Bramley Parish Council
Alan Shaw	Dinnington St. John's Town Council
Mr. A. D. Airey	Wentworth Garden Centre
Gerry Somerton	Rotherham United
Alan Nicholson	SYPTE
S. McDermott	Silverwood Miners' Resource Centre
Guy Kilminster	Libraries, Museum and Arts, RMBC
Carol Peace	RMBC Sport and Leisure facilities
Sue Drayson	Rockingham Professional Development Centre
Richard Thomasson	Sheffield City Airport
David Young	South Yorkshire PTC
Wendy Clark	Days Inn
Anne Ball	Days Inn
Julie Roberts	Town Centre and Markets Manager
Holly Booker	RSPB Old Moor
Pat Dyson	Talbot Lane Centre
David Wilde	Groundwork Dearne Valley/LA21
John Silker	Hellaby Hall Hotel
Darren Hayward	Courtyard by Marriott
Dawn Swann	SYPTE
Cllr G. Robinson	Senior Adviser, ERDS
John Wadsworth	Rotary Club
Julie Williamson	Dearne Valley College

Doug Talbot	Business Link South Yorkshire
Joanne Binns	Business Link South Yorkshire
Stuart Reaney	Chesterfield Canal Partnership
Gerry Somerton	Rotherham United Football Club
Mr & Mrs. Rudd	Catcliffe Parish Council
Shelley Bilston	Wath upon Dearne Community Partnership

37. ROTHERHAM READY

The Tourism Forum received a presentation from Mike Garnock Jones about Rotherham Ready, a project which would deliver education about business enterprise to young people (age group 4 to 19 years). It was the intention that Rotherham should become a centre of excellence for business enterprise education, for example Rawmarsh Ashwood Primary School and the Hilltop Special School had been the first schools nationally, in their specific categories, to receive the University of Warwick prestigious business enterprise awards.

The project would assist schools to participate in the Rotherham Young Chamber, in partnership with the Rotherham Chamber of Commerce. Each school would appoint an Enterprise Champion as part of this process. The young enterprise programme would provide education and training in enterprise, in an attempt to help young people gain the skills and knowledge needed to operate their own businesses.

The Rotherham Ready project would last another two to three years under the current funding programme.

38. INVESTORS IN EDUCATION PROJECT

The Tourism Forum received a presentation from Jovan Marić about the Music Factory Investors in Education project, an employer-led initiative to enable businesses to understand and work more effectively with local schools and colleges.

The project incorporated U-explore, an innovative IT package linking schools with businesses across South Yorkshire, which provided young people with relevant information about a range of careers within a variety of employment sectors.

The principal aim of the project was to inspire young people at an early age and support their aspirations throughout their learning; this aim would help to prepare the foundations for a focussed workforce for the future. It was vital for the business community to engage with its prospective employees, in order to meet the future demands of business. There would be opportunities for workshops, master classes in particular work and jobs, as well as mentoring of young people.

39. WORKSHOPS - PROMOTING THE TWO INITIATIVES TO TOURISM BUSINESSES

The Tourism Forum held two workshop discussions about ways of promoting the two Rotherham initiatives to tourism businesses and about how tourism businesses might take advantage of these opportunities for the future generations and for workforce development. The discussions and subsequent feedback included the following issues:-

(a) Rotherham Ready

This project would:-

- ensure that presentations about business enterprise were available to schools
- ensure that there would sound links between schools and business partners
- there would be studies in schools about the impact of businesses on the local communities
- there would be opportunities for schools to participate in designing, manufacturing and marketing products

(b) Investors in Education

The Dinnington Area Regeneration Trust was interested in making use of the U-explore computer package. Within the Dinnington area, the Rotherham Connected Communities Project had been introduced as a means of bridging the digital divide and it was considered that U-explore might also be used as part of the project.

It was noted that U-explore was a wide-ranging piece of software which could be tailored to meet the specific needs of particular organisations, As one example, U-explore was about to be utilised by the Sheffield Hallam University, to assist graduates in finding employment.

In terms of tourism, the benefits of the Investors in Education project and the U-explore software would be shown by matching the qualities of individuals to the careers available in the leisure and tourism industry.

40. SOUTH YORKSHIRE TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Tourism Forum received a presentation from Richard Jones, Chief Executive of the South Yorkshire Tourism Destination Management Partnership. This Partnership was an initiative of Yorkshire Forward and was receiving a substantial amount of European Objective 1 funding.

The aim was to provide assistance to the development of the leisure and tourism industry in Rotherham and in the wider sub-region of South Yorkshire. Venues such as the MAGNA centre and the re-developed

racecourse at Doncaster were two of the main attractions used in the marketing of the sub-region. The 'Robin Hood' airport at Finningley was capable of accommodating the largest aircraft, thereby making the sub-region accessible to all parts of the World.

Reference was also made to the strategic importance of the Y.E.S. project (Yorkshire Entertainment Sensation).

41. **ROTHERHAM VISITOR CENTRE / TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE - MYSTERY SHOPPER SURVEY**

Clare Warsop reported that the mystery shopper exercise had taken place at the Rotherham Tourist Information Centre during August, 2006. There had been contact from mystery shoppers by telephone, by electronic mail and by people visiting the Centre. The results of the 'shopper satisfaction levels' were:-

	2006	2005
face-to-face (in person) service	79.4%	52.4%
response by telephone	100%	76%
response by electronic mail	85%	62%
overall score	87%	

The Centre staff were keen to maintain the high levels of service provided and make improvements where necessary. The aim was to achieve a position in the top five of Regional Tourist Information Centres in Yorkshire and the Humber. This year's winner had been Wakefield, the awards ceremony having taken place at the MAGNA centre.

42. **TOURISM SERVICE - UPDATE**

Joanne Edley reported on the progress of the following issues:-

(i) Accommodation Guide – a new A5 document would soon be published;

(ii) Attractions Guide – a new guide would be published, replacing the Visitors' Guide to Rotherham and the mini-guide. There were copyright restrictions on the use of certain maps and plans;

(iii) Access (disability) Workshops – these workshops would be arranged, whenever, necessary, to cater for demand;

(iv) Walking Festival – this annual event had once again been a success in 2006. The festival had taken place during the July heatwave; nevertheless, the number of people attending had been very high, at 1,300. The longer Rotherham roundwalk had taken place earlier in the year. A report of the survey of participants in the Walking Festival was distributed;

(v) Survey about the 'Visitor Economy' – this survey had gained a reasonable response and would be repeated during 2007; copies of the survey report were distributed;

(vi) Business and Industry Survey – the low response rate from the industry would need to be improved upon in the future and businesses were asked to make a note that the next annual business and industry survey would take place during May, 2007; there was a need to increase the marketing of Rotherham and South Yorkshire as a venue for group travel. For example, buses and coaches bringing holiday-makers through the area could be encouraged to make short stays in local hotels, before continuing their journeys to other destinations;

(vii) Charter Mark – The Tourism Service was working towards the Customer Service Accreditation.

43. CONFERENCE AND BUSINESS TOURISM - UPDATE

Anne Grayson (Rotherham Investment and Development Office, RiDO) reported on some of the benefits the South Yorkshire Destination Partnership would bring to local venues, including targeted marketing and public relations campaigns. The Partnership will be attending a number of exhibitions and events, both in the United Kingdom and in Europe, to ensure that South Yorkshire is effectively marketed as a location for future conferences, exhibitions, and other major events. One important forthcoming event is the Confex exhibition in London during February, 2007. The Partnership would be utilising over 45 square metres of exhibition space, on two levels, to market the sub-region to international event organisers, and launch the official South Yorkshire Conference Guide. It is also hoped to run a series of familiarisation visits to the region in the Spring of 2007.

A number of new venues has been added to the Rotherham portfolio, and some had already secured business through RiDO's services. Cent @ Magna has held a series of video conferences, linking with a recruitment company in Australia.

44. CULTURAL AND TOURISM AUDIT - UPDATE

The audit of Culture and Tourism had taken place during July, 2006 and the result had recently been announced by the Audit Commission. The Rotherham service had been awarded a two star rating and was stated as being a good service with good prospects of improving to a three star rating. The audit had been a very useful exercise and the experience would help in making improvements to the service in the future.

45. ITEMS FROM FORUM MEMBERS - FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Tourism Forum noted that there were a number of significant events

scheduled to take place during the next year, all of which would have a positive impact upon the leisure and tourism industry in Rotherham and South Yorkshire:-

(a) Bollywood Film Industry Awards (Summer, 2007) – the annual awards ceremony of the Asian film industry was a similar event to the film industry's 'Oscar' awards ceremony in America; the ceremony itself would take place at the Sheffield Arena, with the after-show party being held at the MAGNA centre;

(b) United Kingdom Microsoft Challenge – these team building events would have their closing ceremony at the MAGNA centre;

(c) United Kingdom Corporate Games (last week of June 2007) – an event incorporating many of the mainstream, Olympic sports; the indoor sports events would take place at the MAGNA centre, with some outdoor events (eg: canoeing) happening at the Rother Valley Country Park. This event would mean the booking of more than 6,000 hotel bedrooms in Rotherham and South Yorkshire.

46. CLIFTON PARK - AWARD OF HERITAGE LOTTERY GRANT

Elaine Humphries (Friends of Clifton Park) reported that a Heritage Lottery grant application had been successful in respect of the development and improvement of Clifton Park. The annual bonfire and fireworks display would take place on Sunday evening, 5th November, 2006, with a smaller fireworks display, specifically for children, taking place earlier in the evening.

47. ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed:- that the next meeting of the Tourism Forum take place at the Aston Hall Hotel on Tuesday, 24th April, 2007, commencing at 4.30 p.m.