

Teesdale Marketing Ltd - Annual General Meeting 4th March 2014

Chairman's Report

Teesdale Marketing is a voluntary non-profit organisation and, as a result, doesn't exist as a company for its own ends or shareholders. It doesn't have any significant assets, premises, paid officials or employees and it doesn't promote itself. As a result, you don't hear a lot about the company, but you do hear quite a bit about its projects; projects that are part of Teesdale Marketing's objective to promote and energize Teesdale.

Amongst projects that you'll have heard about these last few years is Love Food. As mentioned in my report last March, further funding from the Big Lottery was received to enable a fourth year to help develop the longer term sustainability of the project's key benefits. The funded project finished at the end of January but its benefits continue.

It was hoped that one of the long term benefits would be use of the test kitchen which became operational in August 2012. It has been used by local producers to try out production/make larger batches and for Love Food to run food-related courses but with the Durham County Council uncertainty over the future of Woodleigh where the equipment is installed, we are having to make arrangements for the equipment to be removed.

In contrast, our collaboration with the North Pennines AONB Partnership has enabled equipment bought with extra funding from Big Lottery Local Food to be installed and used at Bowlees and this is aiding their educational programme, the café operation and providing some income into Love Food through hire of the mobile pizza oven.

The project's key objectives have been adhered to; not least helping local producers emerge, grow and develop, encouraging both commercial and domestic consumers to expand their local food knowledge and repertoire and, of course, promoting the Durham Dales as a food destination for both visiting and sourcing.

One very successful part of the project was aimed at educating young people as to the joys and benefits of producing, cooking and eating. An inter-school "Come Dine With Me" cookery competition aimed at Year 5 and 6 pupils, culminating in a special dinner cooked by the winners, and rolled out in Teesdale last year during 2012, was re-run last year with 19 schools from across Teesdale and Weardale taking part and attending the exciting award event at Staindrop Comprehensive. Much thanks must go to Angela Whiting for her imagination, drive and organising skills for Come Dine with Me alone.

The Love Food project was an economic development project, welcome enough in these challenging economic times, that embraced both local industry and tourism and also worked within the education

sector. As a result we've worked closely with our partners in the project - including the North Pennines AONB Partnership, the South Durham Enterprise Agency, Weardale Visitor Network, Allen Valleys Community Partnership, UTASS, Middleton Plus, Barnard Castle Vision and Durham County Council – and now under the leadership of Angela some of the initiatives and potential income streams for sustainability developed during the course of the project will hopefully continue.

The Teesdale Where to Stay Guide for potential visitors, and which is linked to the online accommodation listings on our Explore Teesdale website, is again being produced and will be distributed mainly outside of Teesdale. This year though another organisation is working under the direction of Teesdale Marketing to produce it; the guide is something that's welcomed by accommodation providers and our new way of working will hopefully guarantee its long term future.

Whilst it's always pleasurable to talk about successes, the trial of a Durham Dales walking festival held in 2013 didn't go as well as hoped, attracting few people to the area; although the associated publicity will have done some good in promoting our area. However, as a result of its poor showing, along with little or no public funding, there are no current plans to repeat the festival.

The footbridge attraction is still quietly moving forward. Keenly supported by the County Council, the project has gone through a long period of feasibility study, extended public consultation and design. It has been a long road to get the project to where it is but it's interesting to note that two similar bridges in France took 15 years to come to fruition with initial opposition from local civic officials turning to support once the bridges were built, demonstrating their benefit to the surrounding area. We hope to be approaching potential funders soon for its building.

With the continuing tough economic climate, there will be continuing challenges to economic development and, particularly relevant for us in Teesdale, tourism over the next few years. With the reduction in public sector front-line services it becomes ever more important that residents become involved in the invigoration of the local economy via such organisations as Teesdale Marketing as well as the Barnard Castle Vision which Teesdale Marketing is keen to continue to support.

2014 and beyond will continue to be a challenge but Teesdale Marketing's still rising to that challenge. As is frequently stated, thanks must go to Hazel Coppack and Angela Whiting without whom none of it could happen. Hazel is now stepping down from active day to day project management but future activity, particularly Love Food activity, is being left in the extremely capable hands of Angela who has been Hazel's invaluable project assistant over the past 4 years.

Bill Oldfield, Chairman

4th March 2014