

## Marketing and PR Partner's Group

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019

Northumberland Tourism, Wansbeck Workspace, Rotary Parkway, Ashington, NE63 8QZ

### ATTENDING

Cris Brown (CB) Rachel Williamson (RW) Lyndsey Pennington (LP) Steph Tebay (ST) James Nightingale (JN)	Northumberland Tourism
Caroline Robinson (CR)	Alnwick Castle
Darren Mayne (DM)	Alnwick Garden
Tracey Cullen (TC)	Alnwick Garden
Karen Larkin (KL)	Bamburgh Castle
Will Douglas (WD)	Bamburgh Castle
Jan Williams (JW)	Blue Badge Guide
Hugh Cheswright (HC)	Bright Spark Creative
Nigel Jarvis (NJ)	Heart of Hadrian's Wall
Chloe Baker (CBA) + 1	Kirkley Hall Ltd
Tim Jones (TJ)	Lundgren Tours
Karen Jones (KJ)	Lundgren Tours
Victoria Malloy (VM)	Manor Walks Shopping Centre
Melanie Straight (MS)	Matfen Hall
Karen Cram (KC)	Mill House
Louise Thain (LT)	National Trust Cragside & Hadrian's Wall
Laura Knowles (LK)	National Trust Cragside & Hadrian's Wall
Sarah Davidson (SD)	NCC
Ruth Tweedie (RT)	NCC
Iain Robson (IR)	NCC AONB
Penny Stewart (PS)	Northumbria Coast & Country Cottages
Duncan Wise (DW)	NNPA
Harvest Harris-Jones (HHJ)	NNTA
Becky Madely (BM)	November Club
Ian Dommatt (ID)	Old School House
Kate Dommatt (KD)	Old School House
Anna Tallon (AT)	Seaton Delaval Hall
Robin Freer (RF)	St Mary's Inn
Ali Taylor (AT)	St Mary's Inn
Sonya Galloway (SG)	Vindolanda
Liz Hagger	Visit Corbridge
Elizabeth Hallissey (EH)	National Trust – Wallington
Sarah Wilkinson (SW)	National Trust – Wallington
James Fell	English Heritage

1. Welcome and Introduction of Northumberland Tourism Team

Cris Brown – Business and Marketing Manager  
Lyndsey Pennington – Office Administrator  
Rachel Williamson – Business Development Executive  
James Nightingale – Online Marketing Executive  
Steph Tebay – Project Executive  
Jude Leitch – Director

2. Update on Northumberland Tourism Marketing & PR Activities

Please refer to Rachel Williamson's presentation.

3. Discover England Fund Projects Overview

Please refer to Steph Tebay's presentation.

4. Partner Updates

**Vindolanda and Roman Army (SG)**

- From 8<sup>th</sup> April they are beginning their acclaimed excavation which will hopefully attract international visitors to the sites and local areas.

**Alnwick Gardens (TC)**

- Ramside Estates no longer trade from Alnwick Gardens and Searcys is now the supplier.
- Tracey is moving to a role with Searcys on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Alnwick Castle (CR)**

- New Alnwick Castle Attraction leaflet distributed to group.

**Lundgren Tours (KJ & TJ)**

- They run guided theme tours around Alnwick and the castle as well as private tours to Holy Island.
- They will be attending both Tourism Fairs should anyone want any literature.

### **Mill House (KC)**

- Attended for the first time and found it useful. Looking at adding some self-catering accommodation to her portfolio.

### **Old School House (ID & KD)**

- First time attending this meeting. They are opening a new five bedroom B&B in Haltwhistle in Spring 2019 which they have fully refurbished.

### **Northumberland County Council (IR, SD & RT)**

- (IR) Area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) manages the impact on visitors to the coastal areas promoting car free days, reducing pollution campaigns. A new app called “re-fill app” is currently being promoted and an A4 visitor guide is due to go to print soon to go to businesses to inform their guests how to look after our AONB.
- (SD) Tourism Fairs, 19<sup>th</sup> March at Alnwick and 21<sup>st</sup> March at Hexham. At the Hexham event there will be breakout workshops from Mediaworks on Digital Marketing and attracting International Visitors from Northumberland Tourism.
- Running a photography competition via Discover Our Land social media – open to all, looking for more entries from children.
- Tourist information points are being finalised. More for 2019.
- TV programme Heist is also being filmed in Alnwick soon.
- (RT) Works to promote cycling and walking tourism in Northumberland. Focus groups being set up to improve offer in Northumberland.

### **Matfen Hall (MS)**

- Matfen’s gym and spa are being refurbished and there will be special offers to keep an eye out for.

### **North Northumberland Tourism Association (HHJ)**

- Harvest Harris-Jones representing North Northumberland Tourism Association as the new Chair. She is also the owner of Laverock Law Cottages and has won a

sustainable tourism award and the Northumberland North East England Gold award.

### **Brightspark (HC)**

- Works with Chillingham Castle, Chillingham Cattle, Kirkharle and Milkhope.

### **Chillingham Castle (VC)**

- Victoria Curry who could not attend had sent through some feedback regarding Chillingham Castle - This year they are going to concentrate on their 3 main areas: day visitors, self-catering apartment lets & ghost tours/vigils/hunts.
- Last year they got to grips with their accommodation online booking system that is working well and they have definitely seen an increase in bookings. At the moment they are setting up a similar system for their ghost tours and this should be live by the end of this week.
- They have made the decision to stop offering weddings at the castle after 2019. They only have about 6 a year and as they used to close on a Saturday throughout the season for them.
- Last year they opened to the general public on a Saturday and offered weddings after 5pm. This wasn't a great success as they have a small staff and the logistics of getting everything set up after the day visitors left just didn't work. They will still offer the castle as an evening venue for receptions, parties and events.
- Their Minstrel's Hall Tearoom has been shortlisted in the Visit Heritage awards as a 'Great Place to Eat'. Sir Humphry & Victoria will be attending the awards on the 25<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Ford and Etal Estates (EG)**

- Elspeth Gilliland was unable to attend but asked that the following be fed back.
- Ford & Etal is hosting a familiarisation day for accommodation and other tourism providers on 21st March which includes optional morning or afternoon coach tour round the Estates with Lord Joicey and lunch at the Black Bull.
- Also this year Hay Farm Heavy Horse Centre is working with the Cheviot Brewery to offer horse-drawn carriage rides and micro brewery tours - dates tbc.

### **Four Wynds Guest House (NJ)**

- Chair of the Heart of Hadrian's Wall Tourism Association attended. He also has Four Wynds Guest House.

### **Blue Badge Tour Guide (JW)**

- Blue Badge Tour Guide covering from Berwick to Middlesborough, working with group travel, walking tours, conference tours and media. Already has 2020-2021 travel trade walking tours organised.

### **English Heritage (JF)**

- Reported that in terms of performance Northumberland EH sites do perform the best. Lindisfarne Coast is up in visitor numbers but there is no capital investments this year. Warkworth Castle and Dusntanburgh Castle visitor numbers slightly down. Events if not already should all be on the EH website.

### **Kirkley Hall (CB)**

- New Buschcraft on site which is being sold to families, birthday parties, stag and hen dos that can be for a day or a weekend.
- Wide range of experiences on offer to visitors.
- Updated their website and visitors can now purchase the experience directly from the website.
- Received funding from the Defra Project and the lottery heritage to improve their woodland walkway.

### **National Trust (AT) (ST) (LT) (LK)**

- Seaton Delaval Hall is currently going through a massive conservation project which is on-going for next couple of years. Parts of the Hall will be closed to the public during this time, but the rest will remain open.
- Wallington are focusing on active outdoors and launching a cycling tour so lots of active events to promote for the summer.
- Cragside, Housesteads and Cherryburn. Cragside has had a record number of visitors from outside the area, but are also focusing on attracting local visitors.
- Currently looking at changing the seasonal opening times of Cragside and promoting some 'get active' events.
- Winter-proofing the grounds at Cragside preparation for the annual 10k run.
- They have a new catering unit and are looking into visitors being offered just one ticket price.
- Housesteads has been one of the leading attractions.

### **Bamburgh Castle (KL & WD)**

- Renovations to a couple of rooms within the castle to create a room for a bride to be to get changed. The stables are being used for the art gallery.
- Adding new events e.g. such as the outside cinema and the foraging events went really well.
- (WD) They are going through some re-branding of the website, annual membership charges. As of 1.4.19 dogs will be allowed into the grounds only.

### **November Club (BM)**

- Is a performing arts company based in Morpeth with productions all based around a certain place, a local legend or fascinating heritage or history.

### **Manor Walks Shopping Centre (VM)**

- Lots of forthcoming events that they will share on the Visit Northumberland events page.

### **St Mary's Inn RF & AT)**

- Re-opened and focus this year is to increase the leisure trade stating that the Inn was a very good bar, restaurant, accommodation, wedding venue and dog friendly.

### **Northumberland National Park**

- The Sill is preparing to welcome its 250,000 visitor and over 130 events planned to take place April-September.
- Walltown has benefitted from an investment to weatherproof the kiosk.
- The Hexham/Hadrian's Wall bus service AD122 will be back up and running from Easter to September so encouraged people to promote this service to their visitors. They will be running some ebike tours beginning of June.
- Dark skies campaign has had a massive economic impact value to astro tourism and this is very popular now. NGI will soon be reporting the data to establish where the tourists are coming from when visiting the Sill.

### **Visit Corbridge**

- Hosting a number of events with a Midsummers Evening on 20<sup>th</sup> June.
- There will be music festivals, family fun days and the Corbridge Village Show in September. All events are on the visit Corbridge website.
- They have adopted the railway station from Northern Rail and are encouraging visitors to use the public transport due to the lack of parking.

### **Northumberland Coast and Country Cottages**

- They now have over 500 self-catering accommodation providers in their portfolio with the majority situated on the coast.
- Concerns on how Brexit will impact voiced.
- They do have a small international market but will learn more about the impact of Brexit afterwards.
- They send out a bi-monthly newsletter so if there's anything of interest to get in touch with Penny.

### **AOB**

- NT to research into where is available to electronically charge your car ports are situated in Northumberland and add to website.
- Include a link about the app "re-fill water app"

**End of Meeting. Date and time of next meeting to be arranged.**