

## CHAIRMANS STATEMENT

It has been twelve months since Carol Cooper stood to one side and I became Chairman. It has been a hard act to follow.

However a little about myself as many of you will know little or nothing about me and the experiences I bring. My wife Tricia and I have run for the last eleven years a three bedroom B&B, (Four star Gold award, Breakfast award, No.1 on TripAdvisor) at Brockton near Much Wenlock. Previous to that we had a self-catering cottage at Strefford near Craven Arms. At that time I was Chairman of the South Shropshire Tourism Association, a Shropshire Tourism Board member, a South Shropshire District Councillor, a Parish Councillor, and on the Discovery Centre Advisory Board. I also had four years on the Board of Tourism West Midlands. Before all that I was Managing Director of a Holiday Village & Caravan Parks Company with about 2000 letting units on ten sites throughout the UK and Wales, Chairman of the English Tourist Board Rose Award scheme, and joint owner of an award winning Holiday Lodge Park in the Lake District, and a Caravan and Lodge Park at Orleton in Herefordshire.

So you can see I have been around a bit, and I will be using my best endeavours to help further the development and success of Bridgnorth & District Tourist Association.

Supporting tourism, in particular the marketing thereof, continues to be challenging none more so than at present. Although receiving a welcome grant from Bridgnorth Town Council, Shropshire Council funding to the Association is to cease due to stringent budgetary constraints. It all makes things particularly difficult having enjoyed a good number of years under the generous wing of the old Bridgnorth & District Council, and more recent service level agreement funding from Shropshire Council.

With this in mind, your Board are quietly and thoroughly looking at the sustainability of the Association and to take matters forward in a constructive way. This could well mean some new ways of working but you can be assured any decision will be taken in the best interests of all our members.

All in all we have not had a bad year with only a small deficit appearing on the accounts. The sun shone most of the summer and the majority of businesses I have spoken to including ourselves have done ok, if not slightly better than last year. The VisitBridgnorth website hosted by Shropshire Tourism has performed well showing a percentage increase of visits over last year of some 17%. This is a marketing essential and is increasingly important.

Also we have recently adopted a Bridgnorth Area Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, prepared by the Research and Intelligence Team at Shropshire Council after a lot of hard work and consultations led by Tourism Officer Tim King, (who does a tremendous amount of unsung good work on our behalf). We anticipate this being a catalyst to bring together many diverse parties and interests and have a coordinating positive effect on tourism as a whole.

Although we have an enthusiastic committee with an excellent balance of people we would welcome any member, particularly of the younger variety, to please consider joining us. We are all getting older, as demonstrated by one of our elder statesmen, Keith Lincoln, having had the wellbeing of the Association and Bridgnorth close to his heart over too many years to mention has finally decided to hang up his boots. I and your committee owe him many thanks.

Most especially my thanks go to you all for your continued support, as I know that every penny counts these days.

Anthony Webb  
Chairman  
November 2013