

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

First of all I must thank you, our Members, for your continuing support in the work that we do on your behalf.

On a positive note, as an Association we have not had a bad year in 2014 with only a small deficit again appearing on the accounts, and yet another good year on year increase in the number of visits to our Visit Bridgnorth website. As you all appreciate web presence is becoming a critical part of the marketing mix, although our new design Where To Stay Guide for 2014 has been very well received. In my opinion it is still too early to completely put aside this more traditional form of advertising.

However, probably Wind Turbines and Solar Farm planning applications dominated the 2014 agenda in our Bridgnorth area. These are not all as yet completely resolved, but the recognition of the importance of tourism to the overall Shropshire economy was gratifying to have endorsed by so many diverse people.

As you know, we have a joint membership arrangement with Shropshire Tourism with all the additional benefits that ensue from this, and consequently our main source of income continues to be the revenue generated by the Bridgnorth and Much Wenlock Where to Stay Guide.

In the absence of any direct funding from Shropshire Council and although helped yet again by grant money from Bridgnorth Town Council, we are now finding it almost impossible to balance the books and will progressively have to rely upon reserves built up over the years. I anticipate 2015 will really begin to reveal the true state of our finances particularly as some core brochure revenue from Shropshire Council attractions has now ceased due to their further budget restrictions.

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

Bridgnorth & District Tourist Association is well represented on the recently formed Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group (BATAG) which acts as a catalyst to bring together many diverse parties and interests. With the invaluable help of Shropshire Council Tourism Officer, Tim King, this is already having a coordinating positive effect on tourism throughout the area. It is anticipated BATAG will have influence in accessing new Rural Development funding and also new European funding both of which are currently in the pipeline.

Although we have an enthusiastic committee with a good balance of people we would welcome any member to please consider joining us. On this note, we say a fond goodbye to one of our most longstanding committee members,

Sally Tallents, who has been of such good help and sound advice over many years. I and your committee owe her many thanks.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you all for your support through what is proving to be challenging times.

Anthony Webb
Chairman
November 2014