

## CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

This last year has seen many changes in the way Tourism is supported throughout Shropshire.

Your Association has continued to actively support and market Bridgnorth & Much Wenlock & District with the production and distribution of 12,500 copies of an attractive and well received Where to Stay Guide, a Town Map produced in conjunction with Bridgnorth Town Council, a South Shropshire Discovery map produced in collaboration with Shropshire Hills Tourism, and the Visit Bridgnorth website which has again achieved increasing success in the number of visits achieved. We also continue to enjoy joint membership with Shropshire Tourism and have a very good working relationship with them which brings benefits to our relatively small Association which are not immediately apparent.

As you all appreciate web presence is becoming a critical part of the marketing mix, although our Where To Stay Guide for 2015 has been very well received. In my opinion it is still too early to completely put aside this more traditional form of advertising and the new 2016 edition will be in circulation before Christmas. Thank you all for your continuing support for this.

As a guide to the success of our website, we achieved a total number of visits of 89,163 in 2011/12; 108,356 in 2012/13; 127,866 in 2013/14; and 148,771 in 2014/15. An increase of some 67% over the period. I was particularly pleased with the results of the VisitBridgnorth website for our Old Quarry Cottage B&B given at the time of the membership renewal. Earlier in the year your committee took the decision not to sit back on our laurels and commissioned Shropshire Tourism to produce a brand new responsive website which will be completely sorted ready for next year. I will be disappointed if this doesn't produce even better results than ever!

As you know, we have a joint membership arrangement with Shropshire Tourism and our clear intention is to continue with this. Some of you may be aware that Shropshire Hills Tourism has decided to go it alone in the future, but your committee feels it would be completely wrong for your Association to step into uncertainty at this time of inherent financial restraints. You will see from the accounts that BDTA enjoys good financial reserves carefully husbanded over the years, and our continuing aim is to minimise any deficit that may occur. This is the prime reason for the small extra charge for web entry which was instituted for the first time this year. I was unhappy that we felt obliged to resort to this but thank you all once again for your understanding of the position.

Bridgnorth & District Tourist Association is well represented on the Bridgnorth Area Tourism Action Group (BATAG) and the Shropshire Hills & Ludlow DDP. However a bitter blow by Shropshire Council earlier in the year was that they terminated the posts of the two Tourism Officers and replaced them with one strategic development officer. Fortunately this is still Tim King who has managed sterling work over the years, but his new remit is such that his hands on approach will no longer be available to us. This is unfortunate as new external funding opportunities are at last coming to fruition.

However, a bold move by Shropshire Tourism in response to the Government's recent five point plan in Backing the Tourism Sector will see a number of associations and providers, including ourselves, brought together to coordinate all things tourism in Shropshire - to be known as Visit Shropshire. So things are certainly moving on in a positive way. We are also glad to lend our support to the local Vision Bridgnorth in implementing the tourism aspects in the recently agreed Bridgnorth Town Plan.

We tend to involve ourselves in all such co-ordinating initiatives as we believe working together achieves more than being on your own. We trust that this epitomises the view of you all in being such loyal supporters of our Association.

Anthony Webb  
Chairman  
November 2015

