

**Accommodation Providers Meeting
Wednesday 9th March 2022 at Southwell Library**

Present

Honor Dunkley, Penny Rainbow, Rebecca (Lavender Cottage), Lindsay (Southwell Retreat), John Wolfenden (Flo's cottage) Becky (the stables) Michelle (upton) Kate (No56 Church St), Newhall Campsite, Kate Islip (Blue Barn) Linda (The Bramley Apple Pub), Karen (kirklington) Angie (The Hopbarn)

Apologies

James Kemp (The Crown)

Group Information

Councillor Penny Rainbow for Southwell Town Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) gave a brief introduction about the aims of the group which is to provide an opportunity for networking and support for accommodation providers in the town and surrounding areas. In this way we hope to improve the marketing of local accommodation in the town, welcome and assist new or prospective providers to set up and share good practice/ideas with each other.

The group will feed into the Southwell Tourism Partnership Group which in turn reports into the Town Environment Committee. The group will hopefully meet 3 or 4 times a year and two members would represent the group at the Southwell Tourism Partnership - currently that is Lindsay and Rebecca.

Existing Tourism Offer

Honor Dunkley - Events, Tourism and Communications Officer at Southwell Town Council gave everyone a tourism pack to show what is currently on offer from the Tourist Information Centre and online, in terms of printed listings for the following: Tourism map, Accommodation listing, Where to Eat, Town Walk and Directions to the Workhouse.

Declan Joyce will be updating the Tourism Map with a new print run coming out April/May. Suggestions from the group were to show where the Co-op is and the recycling centre, the cashpoints at the Co-op, One Stop and the BP garage, plus the W on the Workhouse image.

Accommodation providers are welcome to contact Honor and let her know if they require a number of these packs for guest reference. Also Honor asked for any updates to ensure the information held at the tourist information centre and online was up to date and correct.

Links with NSDC and Visit Notts

Honor also explained that Southwell Town Council also liaises with NSDC and Visit Notts re tourism and that NSDC runs a TAG group (Tourism Action Group) which is open to everyone to attend. The next meeting is on Wednesday 11 May 2022, 2pm-4pm at the Lyth Building, NTU Brackenhurst Campus, Southwell. Let Honor Know if you plan to attend.

Grants

The main support that NSDC are providing to accommodation providers at the moment is promotion through the 'Stay' pages of their visitor websites and the Business Resilience Programme (and associated grants of up to £5K), being delivered by their partners at Vispera. More information, including a video, about the programme is available at:

<https://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/bgrprogramme/>

Vispera's exciting specialist support and grant programme for the district's Visitor Accommodation sector is still accepting applications. For further details, please see the attached flyer, or contact Maria directly at maria@vispera.co.uk

Accommodation Providers Comments

Lack of Taxi Provision

Everyone agreed that getting a taxi was very difficult for guests and that often accommodation providers felt the only option was to provide a lift themselves for weddings, meals out and events in the area. Taxi's are difficult to book and often cancelled at the last minute. An improved taxi service for Southwell and the surrounding area would make a big impact on the quality of service provided for guests in our town. Shuttle bus was a suggestion too. HD to raise this issue at next Southwell Tourism Partnership Meeting

What's App Group

Honor suggested setting up a What's App Group for those interested to ease communication when trying to help enquiries re accommodation and also so that accommodation providers can ask questions and support each other. HD to set up.

Improved and Simplified Accommodation Directory

Accommodation providers suggested that a more succinct listing of accommodation providers would be useful. HD to create a listing similar to Newark Accommodation Groups listing.

Contact big Event Organisers with the simplified accommodation directory and send them an online and hard copy tourism pack so that they can engage with their stall holders re what's available in the town both for an upcoming stay and a repeat stay at a later stage. The pack could include discounted prices if accommodation providers, eating establishments or shops wanted to do this to encourage repeat stays. It was noted that many visitors want to come back because they hadn't realized just how much there is to do in the area. HD to follow up. Suggestions of events to contact were the antiques shows, the Joules Sales, the Lowdham Book Festival, the craft fairs, Lowdham events, Southwell Racecourse, Newark Showground etc

Calendars – suggestion that a town events calendar could be one that other people could link to and synch with so that all the events for the town would automatically appear on their accommodation website calendar. More IT advice would be required for this to be actioned.

Free to Book App was recommended by a few accommodation providers that helps with linking all booking calendars together in one calendar – such as Booking.com, Expedia, Airbnb, so that any double bookings can be avoided.

Village Information Sheets Idea put forward to create information that highlights village walks with links to pubs and tearooms. Anyone interested in helping to create these? Or if the information was provided, Honor could put something together and we could trial it.

Date of next meeting

Wed 22nd June 2022 at Southwell Town Council