

Wells Town Council

Tourism Portfolio

Launch of Visit Norfolk.com

The launch of VisitNorfolk took place at the John Innes Centre in Norwich on March 19th. I managed to get an invitation. Some bullet points from the meeting:

- **2012 was a difficult year because of the rain, the Olympics and the recession**
- **The third quarter of the year was better in the region as a whole.** There was a 9.4% increase in length of stay, 13.4% increased spend; 21% increase in spend per trip. The spend in the county is now £2.6 billion per year. There were 31 million trips made by visitors. 51,000 people are directly employed in tourism and 14% of employment in Norfolk is directly related to tourism.
- **Expectations for 2013 are for improvements in the spending of tourists.**
- **Websites provide the most used access to tourism in Wells.** The Visit Norfolk site is about to be revamped. It will focus variously on the seven areas of the county; local knowledge is important; local input will be important; it will be interactive.
- **Internet marketing is the second most important medium.** Social media are effective in promoting tourism. (Destination brochures are regarded as most effective by a minority; their role is when people have arrived.)
- **Round the year tourism will feature heavily.** There will be more emphasis in encouraging last minute as well as long term planned trips – the market shows an increase in late bookings and short breaks. (We know that we need more people in February not August; protection of our assets means not allowing fragile ecosystems to be damaged by tourism.)
- **The experience of visitors needs to be positive** This means not surprising them with a place which is not as good as they hope. (Providers need to check, for instance, comments on *Trip advisor* and respond positively) All year tourism means all year provision though not necessarily with the same offers. Tourism offers need to be more sharply focussed
- **There is a Tesco store in Wells already....** only it's on wheels. According to one of the agencies which lets cottages in Wells, one of the first questions people ask is 'Does Tesco deliver in Wells? He is willing to receive and send information to lettees about shops in Wells. It would be good if we could say that any of the local shops delivered, and could be contacted online prior to visitors coming. At the very least some people may be encouraged by getting information from local food suppliers in advance so that they may enjoy the experience of shopping.
- **The new tourism organisations require membership** This means that if Wells is to influence websites or any other promotional ideas, it needs to join Destination Management Organisation most appropriate to it, which in our case means VisitNorth Norfolk. 'Pay to play' is the message I was given. Of the two levels, Norfolk and North Norfolk it is the second which will generate the most copy on websites. For Wells to influence the DMOs, a representative body needs to speak with one voice to it which could be the town council or could be a chamber of commerce/forum such as was suggested by the clerk at the last meeting. I am in conversation with some local retailers.
- **Anyone wanting further information has only to ask.**

Roger Arguile 19th. March 2013