

## Minutes of Bala and Penllyn Tourism Association 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010

### **Attending**

Melanie Williams  
Sioned Llewelyn  
Stella Welch  
Katrina Le Saux  
Mike and Mary Gareth  
Jack Reeves  
Megan Pugh  
Sian Jones  
Shan Banfield  
Nora Jones  
Gareth

### **Apologies**

Keith Robinson  
David Mitchell  
Wendy  
Gwyneth Jones  
Olwen Davies  
Lou Robertson

The meeting was held at the Tourism Information Centre and our thanks to Nora and Gareth for organising seating and providing food and drink.

Last month's minutes were read by Melanie Williams and approved by Jack Reeves and seconded by Katrina Le Saux.

Mel presented the Chairman's Report and also the Treasurer's Report, see attachments.

Sian Jones presented the group with facts and figures relating to Tourism to help explain why it is necessary to find savings directly affecting the running of the Tourism Information Centre.

Although the facts and figures are quite intricate, it is worth noting that Tourism is non-statutory and will, therefore, most certainly be vulnerable in these economically challenged times.

Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Barmouth have all been designated, "hub" TIC's and they will remain unchanged. The annual numbers of people attending and contacting are high: 65,000, 82,000 and 105,000, respectively. Bala-35,000, Pwythelli-39,000 and Llanberis-40,000, have been targeted for financial cuts. Tywyn and Bangor will close and Tourist Information Points will be developed in these sites.

Since 1996-2010 there has been an overall reduction in usage of TIC's by 43%, accommodation is now frequently booked via the internet directly with the provider. In 2009 Bala generated £18,000 from bed bookings. The money generated from retail items was up by 27.5%.

Suggestions were welcomed from the group, by Sian, in regards to increasing visitor numbers, revenue and services offered. Ideas included;

Selling tickets for events  
Booking beds for onward journeys.  
Hosting local artists  
Improved signage

Nora and Gareth asked for the Bala Tourism Group to actively support and promote the TIC. Nora said that very few members 'phone through their availability on a

regular basis. It would also be helpful for all accommodation providers to make sure that the details and prices are correct by popping into the TIC and checking the folder.

Mel mentioned that the recorded answer 'phone message was very long and could be off putting.

Stella suggested a central call centre for all TIC's thereby reducing costs and leaving staff free to spend more time with visitors.

Mel asked about Dolgellau which has non-graded websites on it's own website. Sian Jones said that Visit Wales policy is that all promoted businesses need to be graded. Shan Banfield said that all service provider leaflets displayed had to be tourist board graded to be displayed in TICs but she didn't think they had to be graded to go on the website. Mel requested for this to be verified with regard to the visitbala website.

Katrina asked for a poster to be produced advertising opening times and directions for TIC, this is to be displayed upon Town Notice Board.

Ray Hind had asked for Mel to present two queries about Bala being a possible, "Gateway" TIC. He also asked for clarity on overlaps in publicly funded tourism ie websites.

Mel said that the, "Bala Welcome Audit", still had areas outstanding that had not been looked at. It would be useful to set up a group meeting which would discuss the infrastructure of Bala town; the Town Council, Partneriaeth Penllyn, Snowdonia National Park, Economic and Regeneration Officer were mentioned.

A petition to make Bala a, "Walkers Welcome" town was explained by Mel. An initial 200 signatures are required, so far 60 have been gathered.

The meeting closed at 21.00hrs.

The next meeting will be Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June, venue to be advised nearer the time.

**Bala & Penllyn Tourism Association**  
**Chairman's Report April 2010**

As Chair and Treasurer, Ray and I are involved in a cluster group set up through Mid Wales Tourism to encourage partnership working of Tourism Groups within Meirionnydd. So far we have created and use an online forum for Group Networking

- We are looking at creating a central Web page for embedding in group sites
- We are looking at sharing best practise in Websites and eMarketing
- Sharing best practise and exploring collaboration in print and distribution
- Undertake Group Social Media Marketing
- Creating a Sustainability Plan

Further to my meeting with the Bala Business Group we are now receiving the minutes of their meetings which will mean we can have some joined up thinking when planning. I also extended a welcome to the business group to come and join us at our meetings. *(We are also informing and inviting the Town Council, Partneriaeth Penllyn, Gwynedd Council via Sian, our TIC staff, Cywain, Tourism Partnership Mid Wales and Snowdonia Mountains and Coast staff.)*

Some projects we could work together on are:

- Town map
- Updating/production of leaflets
- information boards (and town council)
- empty shop windows - perhaps placing posters in them
- Flags for the town

The business group are also looking at offering special discounts which will be offered in the format of postcards which will be made available through us for our visitors.

A lot of work has been going on behind the scenes to gain new members and to encourage existing members to renew and my thanks go to Katrina and Ray.

The web site has continued being developed over the last few weeks. Ray and I have been doing a lot of testing of members log in and it is now ready to trial. There will be bespoke and on-line help and support documents coming soon! So if you haven't already please log in so we can allocate your listing to you personally. Or log in for a free listing but better still join the Bala and Penllyn Tourism Group and have an enhanced listing for just £40.00 p.a.

Late availability & special offers from members log-in is now done but only for accommodation and it needs testing.

Live feed from Mid Wales Tourism of events is awaiting code from Mid Wales Tourism.

Picture Gallery – you can now add pictures to the web site – so please do if you have any good ones.

Many thanks to Stella for providing text on Churches and Chapels in the area. We are extremely grateful for the contribution and have added recognition on the web page by providing a link to Bala Backpackers.

Walkers Welcome – we are now in a position to start collecting signatures. So if you would like to help with getting Bala registered as a Walkers Welcome Town and you haven't already received a petition form please let me know. See <http://www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk> for more information.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Best wishes

Mel

## Bala & Penllyn Tourism Association Meeting 22 April 2010

### Treasurer's Report

The bank balance is £4,445, since the last meeting we have received membership and web fees from those members who have renewed their membership. The majority of this is allocated to the website. Renewal for 2010 is now due and a number of member's have still to renew their membership.

### Marketing/Website Report

Members log-in to the VisitBala website is now ready for testing– this will add a capability so that members will be able to update their own entry. We would like 2-3 members as guinea pigs to test the member's log-in.

Gwynedd Council distributed the VisitBala flyer/postcard at the Outdoor Show and also through the TIC's and requests for information. Members can collect a batch of flyers from the TIC.