

## **Swindon Hoteliers Meeting**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008, 9.30am**

### **Menzies Hotel**

#### **Attendees:**

Neil Brailsford	(NB)	Menzies
Ian Burgess	(IB)	Stanton House Hotel
Steven Choo	(SC)	Swandown Hotel
David Lee	(DL)	Holiday Inn Swindon
Peter Neil	(PN)	Marsh Farm Hotel
Stephen Rees	(SR)	Express by Holiday Inn
Richard Smith	(RS)	Four Pillars
Joanne Stagg	(JS)	Marriott
John Sweeney	(JSw)	Chiseldon House Hotel
Stuart Whittingham	(SW)	Campanile
Francis Young	(FY)	Pear Tree Purton
Anna Boyle	(AB)	Tourism Skills Network
Rikki Hunt	(RH)	SSEP Chair
Janice Leard	(JL)	Visitor Information Centre
Alison O'Brien	(AO)	New College
Alun Williams	(AW)	Head of Visit Wiltshire Tourism Partnership
Sinclair Brown	(SB)	Swindon Borough Council

#### **Apologies:**

John Clifford	Blunsdon House Hotel
Beata Slapikaitė	Nightingale Hotel
Steve Rycroft	Express by Holiday Inn (Burton)
Sven Saint-Calbre	Jesmonds
Andrew Spink	De Vere Hotel West Swindon
Chris Sherman	Hilton
Nick Williams	Swindon Designer Outlet

### **Key Points Summary**

#### **Alun Williams – Visit Wiltshire**

AW gave a presentation on the progress of the Visit Wiltshire Tourism Partnership. He gave information on marketing activities, a proposed new membership scheme, news on the move to one unitary authority in Wiltshire, and Business Tourism – with Swindon leading on conferencing, via the development of a Wiltshire Conference Bureau.

(Alun's presentation to follow).

### **Rikki Hunt – SSEP update**

RH gave an overview of the structure of the SSEP, in terms of project groups and their aims and progress, the composition of the board and chairs, and their integration of the new Chamber of Commerce Council. He also updated the group on the SSEP major projects including the new University, (which is the University of West of England), where Swindon BC is supporting the development and build of the project, with UWE likely to approach the Government for funding in November. RH also outlined the Business Charter launch where over 50 companies attended, with over half signing up to the Charter on the day, as well as news of the regeneration of the town centre. (See [www.SSEP.org.uk](http://www.SSEP.org.uk) for full details).

SB updated the group on the progress of the Swindon Marketing Group. The Business plan project was underway to liaise with key stakeholders, develop a plan for the organisation structure, develop private sector funding, and produce a longer term marketing plan. A new hub web site project is also underway, to focus on inward investment areas.

SB also gave information on the Visit Swindon Group which was scheduled to meet in August for a workshop to consider how to promote more effectively to Swindon residents and surrounding towns/cities audiences, for attractions and events; how to work with Visit Wiltshire; and how to engage more with the tourist trade in Swindon.

### **Round the Table Hoteliers update.**

NB - Nearing end of £1million refurb. Have been awarded 4 stars from the AA and a Rosette for the restaurant. June has been tough with the loss of meetings and conference space.

SW - Campanile acquired Ibis in January. First phase is refurb to bedrooms and public rooms, as well as staff training. Staff number employed is 20.

RS - 100 rooms being added to make total of 318 for 1<sup>st</sup> September. Some apartments for sale and to rent. Boathouse restaurant open and doing well.

DL - The group was seeing increases of 12-13%, but conditions now getting tougher. Midweek business still good. Ground floor refurb in August, bathrooms in July, with a rebranding programme to come in 2010.

JSw - Hotel was a Best Western, bought out 18 months ago. 78 weddings last year, 40 in 2008. Restaurant has 1 AA rosette, aiming for 2. Slow growth. Restaurant refurb and bathrooms. Conferencing good with some business from Newbury.

SR - Also going through some refurbishment, business ok overall.

SC - Demand fluctuating in June – no overall pattern.

PN - Total of 66 weddings scheduled for this year, with 12 in July. Quiet on weekends if no weddings.

IB - Refurbishing going on, one room at a time. Weddings business good.

JS - Business good – weekends still down. Food prices increases are now a major issue.

FY - Margins being eroded due to food prices. Weekend business good, seeing more holiday customers, with week long stays, typically older age group. Corporate business share is reducing. Refurbishing some areas as well. Vineyard due to produce from next year. Taking part in Inspire work experience programme.

### **New College – Possible Tourism Foundation Degree**

Alison O'Brien - New College partnering with Bath Spa University to develop a foundation degree in Tourism, since many students are not going further onto university, and tourism staff are often lacking management skills. This would require support from industry, as the programme would be over 2 years of part time study with a strong work placement structure. Alison asked for feedback from the group and distributed more information.

## **AOB**

### **Tourism Skills Network Update**

AB - Online questionnaire to come round end of August.  
Group to contact AB re any requirements for skills training.

### **Swindon and Wiltshire Conference bureau**

JL - Chaser bureau software to be integrated with the new Visit Swindon web site. In terms of enquiry processes from the bureau to Swindon venues, the group agreed that a two hour turnaround to enquiries is achievable.

### **Date and venue of next meeting.**

8 September 2008, 9.00am for 9.30am start.  
Richard Smith from the Four Pillars offered venue.

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