



WONDER

Newsletter of the West Lothian Tourism Forum

Welcome..... whatever you're called.

The Forum is delighted that West Lothian Council have agreed to establish a local tourism company that will market West Lothian and promote local tourism interests. Whether it's known as an L.T.C., a D.M.O. or simply "Visit West Lothian", it's a great step forward and will ensure additional resources to support and develop local tourism.

The Forum has been pressing for such change for many years and are happy that the new company will be closely modelled on the recommendations of the recent consultant's report. Tourism businesses will be strongly represented on the board of the new company; two of the eight board places will be directly nominated by the Forum, with a further four individuals drawn from key trade sectors.

The new company will not be a membership organisation, therefore the Forum will need to play an enhanced role in ensuring the full participation and engagement of the local tourism community. The respective roles of the Forum and the Company will be clearly defined and the partnership between the two organisations will be both mutually supportive and mutually dependent.

It's a bold innovative step forward, that I'm sure will mark the start of a beautiful relationship.

Robin Chesters, Chairman, WLTF.

Taking Oil to Aberdeen; Success at EXPO 2008

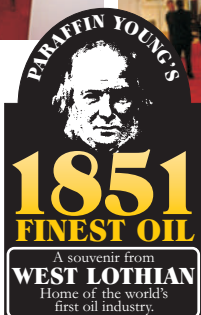
The Forum once again promoted West Lothian to the world at VisitScotland EXPO; Scotland's leading travel trade show. International tour operators were delighted with the range of attractions, accommodation and events that West Lothian has to offer, and by our strategic location in the heart of Scotland and on the doorstep of the Capital.



Our theme this year was 'Lighting the Way'; a reference that combines plans for Homecoming Scotland 2009 with West Lothian's oily heritage. Local heroes Mary, Queen of Scots and James Paraffin Young were on hand as roving ambassadors to light the way back to our stand.

The Aberdeen venue was not the best or the most convenient, and many thanks are due to all of the volunteers who braved the long drive to do their bit for their county. Hopefully things will be a bit easier next year when the show will be held in Glasgow; where we've already booked our stand.

We have a database of tour operators and other buyers who attended Expo 2008 and who visited our stand. If this would be of value or interest to your business, we'd be happy to make a copy available. Please contact Hazel Hay.





West Lothian in your hand

The Forum and the Council have been working together to produce this handy guide to all that West Lothian has to offer to visitors. 100,000 copies of the leaflet are being distributed to tourist and community venues throughout the central belt of Scotland, and supplies should also be widely available within West Lothian.

It replaces the "Discover West Lothian" leaflet that in previous years was produced in a much smaller quantity by VisitScotland, and distributed mainly through the TIC network. Whilst retaining the basic format of the old leaflet, "Have a great day out in West Lothian" is aimed squarely at the day visitor market, has a far livelier design, and includes a much greater range of tourism businesses. The leaflet had to be pulled together in a very short period of time and lessons were learned along the way that will be incorporated into future editions. In the meantime it would be useful to measure the impact of the leaflet as a marketing tool, and members are likely to be asked to help out in a survey later in the year.

TICs, CISs and VACs

Please excuse the acronyms....! As most will be aware, the Tourist Information Centre in Linlithgow did not reopen at Easter due to planned redevelopment of the Burgh Halls. An alternative service for visitors has been provided across the road as part of the Council Information Service in County Buildings. Great things

have been achieved in making the CIS more visitor-friendly, and VisitScotland continues to play a role in supporting the training of CIS staff and the employment of those providing the service at weekends. The former TIC in the Burgh Halls (which served a highly useful role in providing visitor information during the winter months) continues to be used for community purposes. Racks for tourist leaflets are to be provided at the Council's other CIS offices, and the information point in Livingston Designer Outlet will continue to be serviced with leaflets and posters from West Lothian's attractions and events.

Leaflet Exchange Evening

The team at the Linlithgow CIS in County Buildings invite all Forum members to drop by on 20th May between 6pm and 8pm for a "getting to know you" session. See what's provided for the visitor at the CIS, make sure that the team there know about your business, enjoy a drink and a nibble, and bring along a generous supply of your leaflets.

Homecoming 2009

Earlier this year Forum members invested much effort in an ambitious grant application to stage a major event in West Lothian as part of the Homecoming 2009 programme. Homecoming will be a year-long celebration of Scotland's extended global family and an encouragement to those of Scots ancestry to visit their homeland. In common with the majority of the applications we failed to secure funding, but there remains many other opportunities to benefit from the Homecoming programme. Discussions are now taking place about a local programme of Homecoming events, exhibitions and performances that will provide those visiting Scotland with an additional incentive for visiting West Lothian.

How was it for you?

With an unfeasibly early Easter, a month of school holidays, and many other disturbances, it's been a very odd start to the visitor season. Such ups and downs in business are easier to live with when you know that there are others in the same boat and you have opportunity to share experiences and ideas. To understand both the short term blips and the long term trends, much more could be done to regularly collect and disseminate statistics amongst members and build a clearer picture of what makes tourism in West Lothian tick. We hope to introduce a regular survey very soon.

Hello again and welcome

Thank you if you are one of the vast majority who have renewed your membership of the Forum, and welcome aboard if you are one of our many new members. If however you are one of the handful who have still to renew, this is your last reminder before you slip out of our database. Membership already brings many practical advantages to your business and will be essential if you want to fully benefit from the wonderful things that our partnership with the new tourism company will bring. It's probably the best £20 that you'll ever spend..!