



## Cotswolds – Prospects for Tourism in 2011



*Chris Dee (right), Tourism Manager at Gloucestershire First, looks ahead to what we can expect in the coming year – and how tourism businesses and retailers can benefit from the visitor economy.*

Gloucestershire First, the promotional agency for the area, exists to take the lead on tourism and inward investment. A small team runs tourism websites and campaigns, manages local tourism data, and creates a shop window for Cotswold businesses through a remarkable network of travel and food press contacts worldwide.

Here are some current issues which we think are well worth bearing in mind for any Cotswold business looking to make the most of the visitor economy in 2011.

### Our response to cuts: Membership

All local authorities are facing cuts. We have prepared for these by becoming a membership organisation. Cotswolds and Forest of Dean Tourism is the starting point for local businesses with an interest in tourism. Thanks for joining us and we are working hard to increase our Cotswold membership even further beyond the 300 member mark.

We think that the best way to safeguard support for tourism is to attract more members, including those working in the retail, pub and restaurant sectors. Can you help us? Details at [www.cotswolds.com](http://www.cotswolds.com) (click or search 'membership').

### Cutting Marketing Costs

We've noticed that tourism businesses are keener than ever to cut marketing costs by working in consortia. Gloucestershire First excels at getting businesses together and giving support to industry groups. We're eager to be in at the start of any new destination or industry sector groups, especially those that involve retail.



### New Markets

BRIC has become BRICS with South Africa joining Brazil, Russia, India and China as an economy which is forecast to grow significantly in the short/medium term. With economic growth comes an expanding middle class and with that, tourism. Our local tourism partnership has secured valuable Public Relations in all of these markets. After some nifty work at this end, China is beginning to deliver.

### Olympics

We're working out whether or not the Olympics are a good thing for the local tourism economy. (see separate article on the next page).



# Royal Wedding

Britain's 'good news' story for 2011 is the Royal Wedding. Our tourism promotion of the area's celebrity and royal connections has always stopped well short of intrusion, but our office is already handling a multitude of press enquiries from the UK and around the world. We'd welcome details of any hotel packages or other celebrations that are planned.



## Shifting markets

Tourism markets are shifting – we're noticing strong performances from Australia because of exchange rate changes in their favour. The Euro shifted slightly and led to an increase in visitors from some traditional markets such as Holland and Germany – visitors who had been staying away for some time. The USA - traditionally such a strong market - is important, but it is only just emerging from a period of relative stagnation.

We have had to reassess the Japanese market due to the recent natural disaster. At the time of writing Britain remains extremely good value for Japanese travellers due to a 50% shift in the exchange rate. The question now is all about how willing Japanese visitors will be to travel but (again, at the time of writing) it is by no means certain that numbers will fall dramatically.

***We have a long term commitment to the Japanese market and that will continue.***

## 'Staycations'

A nasty word that, according to research, actually means something. Yes, the British are holidaying at home, more frequently, but for a shorter break - and looking for higher impact, higher quality experiences. The Cotswolds is well positioned to benefit from this trend and we are positioning our web content to deliver ideas



for staying, visiting, and shopping. If you are providing high quality visitor experiences, let us know by contacting us on [tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

# Olympian Effort

What are we doing to ensure that the Cotswolds can get maximum benefit from the Olympics in London in 2012?

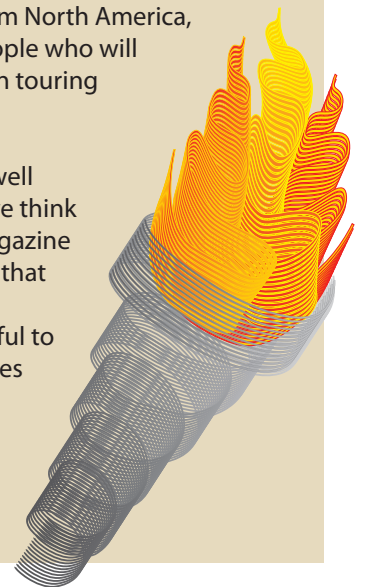
Opinion is divided on the impact that the Olympics will have on tourism to the UK. Optimists believe that thousands of athletes, sports fans and families will not just be visiting London. Pessimists insist that any benefit will be concentrated in the capital and, in any case, millions of potential visitors will be put off by high prices etc, etc.

We think that the Cotswolds can gain from the Olympics, and have been working hard to ensure that our destination benefits from heightened awareness of Britain generally.

- We've connected local businesses with the Olympic Torch relay process and very much hope to see it visit the Cotswolds.
- We're part of VisitBritain's Olympic PR team and we will strive to win more than our share of media coverage from around the world. In fact, the first pre-Olympic article has already appeared in New Zealand. Discussions are underway with Chinese TV to win an audience of 550 million people (!) for a one hour special programme.
- We were first to connect the 400th anniversary of the Chipping Campden Cotswold Olympics in 2012 to the 'other' event to be held in London, with associated PR success.
- We've compiled a list of Cotswold Olympic connections and welcome any contributions. If you now run a B&B, but have an Olympic medal in the safe, do let us know!
- We are working in partnership with the Cotswold Conservation Board and rail companies to pitch for the availability of more convenient tickets to suit the needs of touring overseas visitors.
- We are showing around 'official Olympic package' travel agents from North America, Japan and Korea – the people who will be booking clients' add-on touring packages around Britain.

The Cotswolds is a great, well recognised destination and we think that we can pull in the TV, magazine and radio coverage to ensure that visitors visit us before or after London. As ever, we are grateful to the hotels and other businesses that host and look after travel writers.

More details from **chris.dee@glosfirst.co.uk**



# A Celebration of British Tourism Week 12th – 20th March 2011

Cotswolds Tourism put together a whole programme of press and PR to promote British Tourism Week this March. Tourism in Gloucestershire is worth around £871 million per year and British Tourism Week (a national campaign) helps draw attention to the critical importance of Britain's £115 billion visitor economy. It was a key week for tourism locally as it gave us the opportunity to flag up the services we provide as well as tell local people about the wealth of things there are to do on their own doorstep.

## What went on?

- There was an opportunity to meet your MP – Tewkesbury, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Cirencester and Stroud Tourist Information Centres all hosted visits by their local MP during British Tourism Week – they were given tours of attractions, saw how the TIC's worked and some even worked on the enquiry desk!
- We had a stand at The Cheltenham Festival to promote tourism to both local people and race goers. This included a special exhibition of royal photographic memorabilia to celebrate the value of this form of tourism to Gloucestershire. We also had a photo call in the morning at the stand with Edward Gillespie Managing Director of Cheltenham Racecourse and Laurence Robertson MP. The Tourism Minister, John Penrose, took time out to visit the stand in the afternoon.
- A leaflet celebrating British Tourism Week and the events going on in and around the area was available from TIC's from 1st March
- Some local attractions offered discounted entry prices during British Tourism Week –including a 50% off discount voucher at venues in Bourton-on-the-Water and at Tewkesbury's Out of the Hat Heritage Centre.
- A series of press releases were also sent out to promote British Tourism Week within the Cotswolds.



Visitors to the stand (L2R) - Shirley Wood (Stroud D.C.), Edward Gillespie (M.D. Cheltenham Racecourse), Sue Adie (Cheltenham B.C.), Laurence Robertson M.P. and Anna Sanders (Tewkesbury B.C.)

## Another award for tourism staff?

The award winning team at Gloucester's Tourist Information Centre are in line for yet another accolade. They have been short-listed in the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence – and it means a guaranteed gold or silver award. The competition is run by Visit England and celebrates the highest industry standards.

Robin Barker of Services for Tourism, who manage the awards programme, said:

*"Research proves that the availability of local information remains at the heart of the visitor experience - without it many visitors will shorten their stay and go away less satisfied. Gloucester TIC has been an exemplar in how to do it well, winning the south west awards for two consecutive years as well as achieving the top score in the whole of England in the 2010 mystery shop. They are to be commended for their hard work, commitment to quality and most importantly for their contribution to the whole visitor economy."*

City Council Leader, Paul James, commented:

*"Tourism is important to Gloucester and there is no doubt that our staff help to make the city a first-class destination. They have consistently demonstrated the superb levels of service for which we want to be known – and their efforts are being recognised at the highest national level."*

The awards ceremony takes place at Birmingham University on Friday April 15th.

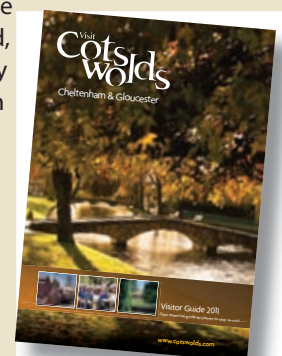
## The success of the combined Visitor Guide

The 2011 Visitor Guide has proved to be a huge success with nearly 300 accommodation establishments and 50 attractions advertising in the combined guide.

An increased print run and a targeted marketing campaign has seen the guides flying out to fulfil requests from across the UK, as well as all over Europe, Russia, China, Scandinavia and USA.

The guide includes sections on culture, food and drink, the Cotswold 'Season', family holidays, activity holidays, the sporting Cotswolds and shopping. Overseas visitors are fascinated by gardens in the Cotswolds, arts and crafts in Stroud, history and heritage in Tewkesbury and Gloucester, and festivals in Cheltenham.

To ensure the guide meets future marketing requirements, we are launching it earlier for 2012. Please look out for this marketing opportunity in May/June.



# Tourist Railway is on the Right Track!

Thirty years ago this year, the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway was created to 'reinstate as much as possible of the former Stratford to Cheltenham line' despite the fact that all the track and most of the infrastructure and buildings had been swept away by British Railways. Some said it could never be done! Now, just over 12 miles of the railway runs once again between Cheltenham Racecourse and Laverton via Toddington. Immaculate steam locomotives haul gleaming railway coaches - a pleasing addition to the Cotswold landscape. The amazing thing is that all of this - re-building of stations and signal boxes; laying track and installing signals; restoring historic steam and diesel locomotives as well as coaches and freight wagons; and running trains - is all done by volunteers.



In April 2010, the railway suffered a major embankment collapse just south of Gotherington station, cutting off the southern two miles of line to Cheltenham. A special appeal was launched by the railway's President, pop impresario Pete Waterman, to fund repairs.

The collapse presented operational difficulties and increased costs and, although the repair work is now nearing completion, it still has yet to be fully paid for. Just to add to the problems, the worst snowstorms since the 1960s hit the area just before Christmas 2010, forcing the cancellation of the railway's Santa Specials, which wiped out thousands of pounds worth of income. Then, just as the railway thought it was putting a bad year behind it, a further landslide near Winchcombe cruelly cut the railway in two. All this has left the Honeybourne Line with £1million to find - and urgently!

However, the incredible pioneering spirit that created one of Britain's most beautiful heritage railways isn't so easily beaten. The emergency appeal fund is still open and brings in desperately-needed money (and you can contribute too!) to secure the railway's future.



For more information or to contribute contact Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, The Railway Station, Toddington, GL54 5DT Tel 01242 621405

Images sourced from [www.gwsr.com](http://www.gwsr.com)

## Yokoso (Welcome) Cotswolds! Japanese signs at Moreton in Marsh

The press really picked up on this story with many articles in UK national press, radio - and the staff at Moreton Area Centre also making a TV appearance.

A number of messages directing Japanese visitors to buses, taxis, hotels and public toilets, have gone up in Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire. The signs were the idea of station manager Teresa Ceesay.

Welcome to  
**Moreton in Marsh**  
Gateway to the  
North Cotswolds

北コッツウォルズへの入り口  
モートン・イン・マーシュへ  
ようこそ!

## Contact Us

It would be very useful to receive constructive feedback so we can gauge whether our communications to you are hitting the spot.

Please comment via  
[tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
or phone (0)1452 328321

## Multi-Million (£) Cotswold Country House Refurb



Ellenborough Park Hotel, has opened in Cheltenham, a country house situated adjacent to the town's racecourse. The hotel and spa remain true to the property's 16th century origins, following a multi-million pound refurbishment. Valet parking, fine dining, country sports and state of the art spa facilities make this destination a welcome addition to the Cotswold hotel stock.

- Set in 90 acres of parkland
- The hotel has 62 rooms including a Presidential Suite with private dining
- Interior design by world-renowned Nina Campbell
- Direct access to Cheltenham Racecourse & helicopter landing pad
- The Indian-themed spa features a hydrotherapy pool, fitness suite and heated outdoor pool



[www.ellenboroughpark.com](http://www.ellenboroughpark.com)

Images sourced from [www.mantiscollections.com](http://www.mantiscollections.com)

## Dates for the diary

**5th April** 1pm - Snowhill Manor & Cotswold FOD Tourism Accommodation Providers Meeting

**18th May** - Berkeley Castle & Cotswold FOD Tourism Accommodation Providers Networking

**13th June** 1.30pm - Mill Dene Garden & Cotswolds FOD Tourism – B&B Forum

## National News

The new national tourism strategy can be found at the snappily titled website: [www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Government2\\_Tourism\\_Policy\\_2011.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Government2_Tourism_Policy_2011.pdf)

If you have difficulty accessing it, search on "Government Tourism Policy".

It's a long document worth reading carefully. From our Cotswold perspective, we were pleased to see tourism's value to the economy quoted and we hope that this will be followed through in practical ways. There is a section on the Olympics as a benefit to the whole of Britain and we were encouraged to see recognition for the Cotswolds as one of Britain's best selling points. They used our Japanese tourism signs picture too! The document includes a section on shifting one of the Bank Holidays to Autumn and (a subject close to our heart) more commercially astute arrangements for fixing up potential Chinese visitors with visas.



Attractions include the award winning Corinium Museum in Cirencester

Predictably most of the media has picked up on the Bank Holiday issue, but there are some more interesting ideas in the detail. We look forward to some action.

Feel free to send us your comments on the policy, and we will include them in the next edition of Tourism Matters.

Email us at [tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk)