

BISHOP'S CASTLE TOURISM COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Bishop's Castle Tourism Community Interest Company * was formed in 2009 from BC Tourism Group which had been promoting and developing sustainable tourism in the area since the early 1990s. It doesn't have shareholders and directors are unpaid. It is a membership organisation which has doubled in size in 10 years from some 50 members in 2000 to 100 today.

The board has a maximum of nine directors. The present directors are: Sue Willmer, Jane Carroll, Peter Norton, Steve and Mary Austin, Helen Vaughan, Janet Preshous and Geoff Grimes.

The company has secured grants since 2004 (the present one £48,000 mainly from LEADER) to contract Dave Palliser as Festivals Officer for the area which largely co-incides with the Community College catchment and the Local Joint Committee area. The contract finishes at the end of 2012 when the work will be "rolled into" that of the new information office staff.

In 2008 Bishop's Castle Tourism obtained "Better Welcome" money to carry out the £30,000 improvements to the Auction Yard/Church Street route. The Town Council gave support and has secured the route as a "right of way" in perpetuity.

Over the years many grants have been used to make improvements for both visitors and residents.

In 2009 Bishop's Castle joined the "Walkers are Welcome" network after work by the company and support from all the town businesses and the Town Council.

As the Tourism Group it helped start Michaelmas Fair – the home grown replacement for the Steam Rally which used to be held in the town on August Bank Holiday. It was also the inspiration for the Town Tour Guides and the Walking Festival.

The company carries on the work of acting as an "umbrella" for the many festivals and activities in the town and surrounding area and members of the board have tourism strategies for the area it covers and have helped to produce the 2011 – 16 Sustainable Tourism Strategy & Action Plan for the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow.

Bishop's Castle Tourism publishes and distributes the Bishop's Castle "Refreshing in more ways than one" leaflet with sponsorship money from local businesses. Each year it publishes a "Where to Stay" leaflet and a "Shopping & Services Guide, Where to Eat and What to do" leaflet. All the information is on the Bishop's Castle website www.bishopscastle.co.uk which the company shares with the Town Council and Enterprise South West Shropshire which hosts the site.

In the future the company hopes to be running a fully staffed Information Centre in Bishop's Castle to serve the town, the Clun Valley and the Stiperstones and Long Mynd villages. The staff would also help develop sustainable tourism in the area, support its members and the wider community and local businesses while working closely with the Town Council, ESWS based at Enterprise House and the Shropshire Hills AONB.

The directors usually meet every six weeks in the upstairs room of the Three Tuns Inn and two or three times a year holds open meetings for all of its 100 members. The annual meeting is in early April.

- The Tourism Group was formed when the old South Shropshire District Council offered £10,000 to any group in Bishop's Castle which would use the money to improve the town centre for visitors – no existing body took up the challenge!
- It followed a SSDC led consultation project during which South Shropshire towns were asked if they wanted tourists. Bishop's Castle people said yes provided the town didn't change in character and that has always been the Tourism Group's (and now the company's) guiding principle.

*** Community Interest Companies**

Community Interest Companies (CICS) are limited companies, with special additional features, created for the use of people who want to conduct a business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage.

This is achieved by a "community interest test" and "asset lock", which ensures that the CIC is established for community purposes and the assets and profits are dedicated to these purposes. Registration of a company as a CIC has to be approved by the Regulator who also has a continuing monitoring and enforcement role.

CICs are a type of limited company designed specifically for those wishing to operate for the benefit of the community rather than for the benefit of the owners of the company. This means that a CIC cannot be formed or used solely for the personal gain of a particular person, or group of people.

CICs can be limited by shares, or by guarantee, have a statutory “asset lock” to prevent the assets and profits being distributed, except as permitted by legislation. This ensures the assets and profits are retained within the CIC for community purposes, or transferred to another asset-locked organisation, such as another CIC or charity.

A CIC cannot be formed to support political activities and a company that is a charity cannot be a CIC, unless it gives up its charitable status. However, a charity may apply to register a CIC as a subsidiary company.