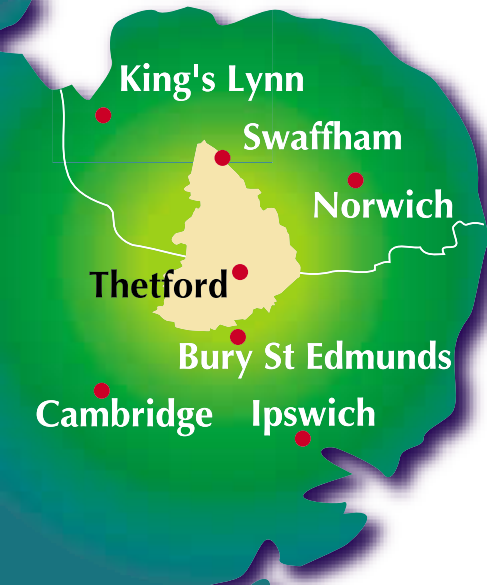




The Brecks

Making Tracks

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRECKS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP



Election of Chair/Vice Chair

Lord Iveagh was elected as Chair and Paul Hill as Vice Chair.

On behalf of all members of the BTP, Iain Dunnett thanked those members of the Steering Group that did not stand for re-election. These included Jan Godfrey (Wayland Partnership), David Bushell (Dower House Camping and Touring Park) and John Flowerdew (Cranford House)

Iain Dunnett also thanked Vanessa Scott for her commitment and tireless energy spent as an ambassador for The Brecks and as Chair of the Steering Group over the past 5 years. The BTP is delighted that Vanessa will remain a member of the Steering Group.



Lord Iveagh and Vanessa Scott at Elveden Hall

Brecks Tourism Partnership AGM held at Elveden Hall

60 members of the BTP attended an Annual General Meeting at Elveden Hall (by kind permission of Lord Iveagh) on Wednesday 29th September.

Guest speakers included:

Iain Dunnett, Suffolk County Council who informed members of work being undertaken to continue the Brecks Sustainable Tourism project at the end of the current 3-year term. The identification of potential funding sources to sustain the project was a key objective.

Leanne Castle of the Suffolk Regeneration Trust advised members of the loan schemes that SRT can provide to support small businesses and social enterprises in not only Suffolk but further afield. Often these businesses are not able to obtain loans from banks or other financial institutions.

For information on Enterprise Loans from SRT contact Leanne Castle, Suffolk Regeneration Trust, 5 Honey Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1RT Tel 01284 731780 email info@suffolkregenerationtrust.org www.suffolkregenerationtrust.org.

Lynne Finnigan, Brecks Sustainable Tourism Project Officer, updated members on the progress of specific outputs of the project.

The following members were elected to the Steering Group:

Elected Members:

Wendy Baker, Brandon Country Park
Ann Butlin, EcoTech Organic Gardens
Bob Chisholm, Weeting
Mary Flint, Crosskeys, Hilgay
Paul Hill, Bike Art
Lord Iveagh, Elveden Estate
Alan Judd, The Bell Hotel, Thetford
Jennie Lock, Greenbanks Country Hotel
Elizabeth Orr Sutcliffe, Didlington Manor
Keith Ready, Thetford Access Group
Canon Sally Fogden, Honington
Vanessa Scott, Strattons Hotel

Standing/Co-opted members:

Breckland Council
Brecks Countryside Project
Countryside Agency
East of England Tourist Board
Forest Heath District Council
Forestry Commission
Keystone Development Trust
Peddars Way National Trail
Suffolk County Council

Message from Lord Iveagh

I am immensely looking forward to chairing The BTP Steering Group. It is an honour to be elected. The Brecks has so much to offer visitors and residents and it is imperative that they are made aware of its unique attributes. By working together with local businesses, communities and agencies, we can raise the profile of the area and make it a truly sustainable visitor destination.

We are grateful to all BTP members for their fantastic support and commitment to making The Brecks

Sustainable Tourism project so successful. We look forward to meeting you at one of the organised events during 2005.

We hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.



Gooderstone Gardens is open all year, even when it snows!

2005 Come Alive in the Brecks



The 2005 Visitor Guide "Come Alive in the Brecks – What to See and Where to Go" will be ready at the end of January. 100,000 copies are again to be printed and will be distributed via Leisure Target, EETB and The Brecks Tourism Partnership.

Action:

If you are an accommodation provider why not send copies to your clients as it may encourage them to stay longer!

New Brecks plaques and stickers



A leading design company has been commissioned to come up with an innovative design interpreting The Brecks logo of twisted pines which will be put on to plaques and stickers.

The plaques and stickers will be delivered to all Brecks graded accommodation providers and attractions early next year.

Action

Please welcome visitors and promote The Brecks by displaying the plaques and stickers in a prominent position.

Welcome to new tourism hosts:

The Brecks Tourism Partnership is delighted to welcome

Alan Edwards and Marianne Downes at Breckland Meadows Touring Park, Swaffham. Alan and Marianne have moved to Swaffham from Sussex and are both keen caravanners.

Caroline & Andrew Blyth at Wereham House Hotel, Thetford. Caroline and Andrew both have a background in hotel management and bring a wealth of experience to their new venture.

Journalists visit The Brecks

The Brecks has hosted 7 journalist visits during 2004. The publications which they represented, and in which articles were published, included:



Motor Caravan Magazine, Birmingham Evening Mail, Prima magazine, Croydon Advertiser, Surrey Mirror, Coulsdon & Purley Advertiser, Sutton & Epsom Advertiser, New Addington Advertiser, Peterborough Herald and Post, Essex Chronicle, Brentwood Gazette and the Hull Daily Mail

We would like to thank all those accommodation providers and attractions that kindly donated complimentary accommodation and entry to attractions. Also, The Forestry Commission for tickets to the summer concerts at High Lodge.

So far, The Brecks has received free media coverage to the equivalent value of £100,000 in advertising space



Laura Kendall and Mark Greaves, Croydon Advertiser, Beverley Johnson and Chris Smith, Hull Daily Mail and Johnathan Godsell, Prima enjoying the challenge of Go Ape in August

New Leaflets for The Brecks



Three new leaflets have been published aimed at providing visitors with information on Where to Stay (accommodation) What's on (Events) and Where to Buy (local food, drink, arts and crafts).

Nearly 100 accommodation providers are included in the Where to Stay leaflet including hotels, bed and breakfasts, self-catering, camping and caravan sites. All are graded or have applied for a grading with the ETC, AA or RAC.

85 food and drink producers and local artists and craftsmen are listed in the Where to Buy leaflet which also includes places to eat.

The A5 leaflets will be distributed to all Tourist Information Centres in The Brecks and beyond as well as to major visitor attractions.

Action:

To help us monitor the effectiveness of these leaflets, please let us know when you have received enquiries as a result of their publication.



Quality Awareness Day



A Quality Awareness Day was hosted at Manor Farm, Great Hockham on 5th October. The event, which was run by the East of England Tourist Board and funded by the Brecks Sustainable Tourism project, was attended by bed and breakfasts, hotels and self-catering accommodation providers.

Delegates learned about quality benchmarks in accommodation, customer expectations and quality assurance. All aspects of operating a Bed and Breakfast or a self-catering business were assessed as well as marketing advice and management efficiency.

Brecks local producers invited to Rural Pastimes Event at Euston Hall



Following the success of The Brecks local produce Taster Event at Lynford Hall in May 2004, there will be another opportunity to sample not only local food and drink but also meet local artists and craftsmen at the popular Rural Pastimes Event which is to be held on Sunday 12th June, 2005.

A marquee will host a range of local producers which will give them an opportunity to network with local tourism businesses at this leading countryside event and also sell their products to a wider audience. This one day event normally attracts 10,000.

Put 12th June 2005 in your diary now!

Action: if you are a local producer interested in attending this event or helping in any way contact the BTP

FOCUS ON THE COUNTRYSIDE

New "easy access" trail at Cavenham

If you haven't visited this site yet, now is a great time to see this National Nature Reserve. There has been extensive upgrading of visitor facilities with the addition of a third nature trail and English Nature is keen to continue to improve the experience of visitors to this important wildlife site. The creation of an "easy access" trail means that people with restricted mobility can now enjoy the area.

So what is there to see at Cavenham? Wetland, Woodland and Heathland trails each tell a different part of the story and how it is looked after to provide the right conditions for wildlife to flourish. To help visitors enjoy the site, Cavenham Heath provides access via gates

rather than stiles and clear signs and information boards are provided. For further information visit www.english-nature.co.uk

The Brecks' newest Local Nature Reserve
Malderscross Hill Local Nature Reserve was officially opened in July. The land is owned by Elveden Farms and managed in partnership with Forest Heath District Council. The reserve has an interesting geological past with the British Museum excavating in January 2003 in order to find traces of river sediment. In the 1860s, hand axes were also found in the area. There is access to the reserve and car park off Wings Road in Lakenheath village. For further information contact Cyd Worden on 01638 719218.

What can I do to promote The Brecks ?

Everyone can play a part in promoting The Brecks. All you have to do is include the Brecks logo of twisted pines on your letterhead, leaflet or website. We can help you do this by providing a CD ROM of the logo or images of the local landscape and wildlife. Or you can

download from www.brecks.org.uk/business/business.htm (then click on Graphics)

Action:

Call us to discuss how you can play a vital role in promoting The Brecks by using our logo.

When was the last time you visited Knettishall Heath?

Stephen Grimshaw, Country Park Ranger.

Knettishall Heath Country Park provides visitors to The Brecks with an opportunity to explore four hundred acres of heath, woodland and river valley meadows. The Country Park is the largest in Suffolk, is open all year and hosts a range of events to suit all ages. I manage the site and all its activities, ably assisted by Maureen Kiss or Mo to her friends.

On the heathland trail, visitors can see a Bronze Age burial mound, evidence of man's early occupation of the site. A key role for Mo and myself is to prevent bracken invasion and to restore heather cover. Look out for the herd of semi-wild Exmoor Ponies which can be seen from the main footpaths and which graze on the heath. A free map of the waymarked trails is available from the Information Office located near the main car park.

Knettishall has a particular appeal for walkers, being the hub of four long distance trails – The Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path National Trail, Angles Way, Icen Way and Icknield Way Path. There are also four waymarked walking trails which provide circular routes exploring the Country Park and all start at the new all-weather car park.

We have particularly enjoyed working with The Brecks Tourism Partnership this year and hosting landrover heathland safaris for visiting journalists and we were pleased that Knettishall has featured in several press articles.

The riverside trail follows the Little Ouse River and passes through meadows and ice age Pingos. This area is currently being restored as a flood meadow using European funding by raising water levels and introducing cattle grazing. The aim is to attract breeding water birds and increase the resident colony of Great Crested Newts.

If you would like further information on Knettishall please contact me on 01953 688265 or email Stephen.grimshaw@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk.

Mo and I hope to see you at Knettishall soon!



Exmoor ponies at Knettishall Heath

The Brecks join the EETB in Belgium



The Brecks Tourism Partnership, in association with the East of England

Tourism Board, has been involved in promoting The Brecks as a leading UK sustainable visitor destination at a major countryside exhibition in Ghent, Belgium.

The EETB had an East of England promotional area and Brecks local producers donated food and drink including apples, apple juice, beer, trout and cheese at the exhibition for visitors to taste.

Copies of the Come Alive in the Brecks leaflets and display banners, together with the local produce, provided an opportunity for The Brecks Tourism Partnership to raise the profile of our very special area to the overseas market.

We are very grateful for the support of our local producers.



Congratulations on Awards

Brandon Country Park
Green Flag Award

Elveden Estate
LEAF marque
Linking Environment and Farming

High Lodge Forest Centre
VAQAS
Quality Assured Visitor Attraction

Strattons Hotel
Les Routiers
Hotel of the Year Award

Clean Green and save money!

If you get some spare time why not look at the following websites which not only focus on green and environmental issues but could also save you money!

Have you considered using Eco-Balls in your washing as an alternative to washing powder? They care for your clothes, your washing machine and the environment. They are efficient and cost-effective. Available from Ecozone www.ecozone.co.uk

How about using cleaning cloths without chemicals? The cloths can be used dry or damp and use only water. They clean grease and leave a sparkling finish on all surfaces from floor tiles to windows and are fully washable (with Eco-Balls!). The cloths are available from a range of High Street outlets, or www.e-cloth.com or for just £1 each from www.musburyfabrics.co.uk

Both Eco-balls and Cloths have been highly recommended by accommodation providers so we thought you would like to know about them too

View www.ecodirectory.org, a new web-based directory of environmentally friendly companies promoted by East of England Development Agency. You can register on it for free to promote your environmentally sustainable practices too.

EVENTS IN THE BRECKS Winter 2004 / Spring 2005

18th December - Mildenhall Italian Market

12th-20th February - West Stow – Ring Quest

Return of the popular family challenge event with a Lord of the Rings theme.

5th March – Children’s Discovery Day (Small Mammals)

High Lodge Forest Centre

Join a Ranger for a hands-on wildlife experience with lots of arts and crafts and learn about inhabitants of Thetford Forest Suitable for children 6-12 years

26th –27th March - Mystery Egg Trail at Lackford Lakes

26th-28th March - Easter Trail at Oxburgh Hall

1st June – Cedric Superknight at Oxburgh Hall – Puppet Workshop and Show for 4-10 year olds

12th June - Rural Pastimes Event at Euston Hall

Come and meet local producers from The Brecks

Do you know of any other major events in The Brecks? We need these for our new Events leaflet and to be included on our website. Events are an important factor in attracting visitors and are part of the visitor experience.

STOP PRESS - NEW

ALL ABILITY BIKES

Suitable for use by children and adults with a range of disabilities and health problems are now available from Bike Art at High Lodge Forest Centre. The range of bicycles includes a dual-control model, quad bikes for children and one has a platform for a wheelchair. The Friends of Thetford Forest Park purchased seven bikes with grants from Lottery Awards for All and Local Network Fund as well as a Friends Event.

PEDDARS WAY NATIONAL TRAIL



A new exciting bus service is planned to meet the needs of walkers and cyclists of the Peddars Way National Trail.


From Easter 2005 buses will run from

Thetford and Hunstanton towing cycle trailers to enable people to reach the Peddars Way without resorting to the car.

Working in partnership with cycle hire, pubs and tourism interests the route has been devised to run through as many villages and market towns as possible either side of the Peddars Way

Funded through the Breckland Objective 2 Cultural Package the service will run until September 2005, restarting Easter 2006.

Full promotion will start shortly so keep an eye open for route and timetables. Contact Tim Lidstone-Scott, National Trail Manager. Tel 01328 850530. Email nationaltrail@norfolk.gov.uk www.nationaltrail.co.uk/peddarsway

 These projects were delivered as part of the Sustainable Tourism Project funded by:



Final Brecks Awareness Day 16th March 2005



The Brecks Awareness Days have been voted a great success by everyone that has attended them. Over 96 participants representing accommodation providers, visitor attractions and Tourist Information Centres have attended 6 events held throughout The Brecks. The final Brecks Awareness Day will take place at Euston Hall, Euston (by kind permission of The Duke and Duchess of Grafton) on Wednesday March 16th 2005.

Action:

If you haven't already attended one of the Brecks Awareness Days yet, hurry and register for the final event by completing the enclosed registration form. First-come-first-served.

Tel 01842 760116 or email brecks.tourism@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk

Grants available for rural businesses in Norfolk

If you are based in the Breckland or Kings Lynn and West Norfolk local authority areas, you may be eligible for a grant to start, improve or expand a rural business. Up to 25% of capital costs or a maximum of £10,000 may be available to you. There is a simple application form and you will receive free assistance with the application process. There is a £50 non-refundable application fee.

You will need to get a move on though as applications are required as soon as possible, but by early February 2005 latest. For further information contact Tessa Blackburn, Norfolk Rural Business Advice Service on 08457 218218 or email tblackburn@easton.ac.uk

The Brecks

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