

NETWORK NEWS

The newsletter of the National Farm Attractions Network

NFAN 2012 conference marks progressive and successful year

THE annual conference and trade show of the National Farm Attractions Network (NFAN) was held at Drayton Manor Theme Park in Staffordshire on February 7th and 8th and enjoyed strong support from both operator and trade members from throughout the UK.

With the theme 'Moving forward,' this year's event was extended by a day to encompass two farm park visits, one to White Post Farm, in Nottingham, and another to Sacrewell Farm and Country Centre in Peterborough.

The main conference day offered a programme covering several key areas of operation and legislation relating to farm park attractions. Proceedings commenced with an introduction from NFAN Chairman Matt Heast who welcomed all those in attendance before introducing the keynote speaker, Adam Henson, owner of the Cotswold Farm Park and a regular presenter on BBC TV's Countryfile and a co-presenter on Lambing Live.

The keynote presentation was followed by a debate and ques-



tion time session, while other sessions during the morning included *Three ways to ensure your team delivers memorable service all of the time*, with Jonathan Winchester from Shopper Anonymous, and *Maximise your catering opportunities*, with Ian Russell



Adam Henson presents the NFAN Farm Attraction of the Year 2011 award to Andrew and Anna Wolfe from Willows Farm Village (see Page 4 for details of all winners).

from Wroxham Barns.

The afternoon began with an update on the industry Code of Practice with David Coackley from the HSE, followed by a session on *Collecting membership income by direct debit – is it for you?* with Andrew Wolfe from Willows Farm Village and David Blower from Hatton Country World.

This year's conference was again accompanied by a trade exhibition which hosted approximately 40 trade members. NFAN would also like to thank the event sponsors for their valued support, including Davies & Co. Chartered Surveyors, Marsh & Company Insurance Brokers, S. Gregory, Farmers Weekly and Agility Marketing.

2012 Open Days

NFAN's Open Days are great for sharing ideas and networking. You can now book for the 2012 events; simply download a booking form from NFAN's website at www.farmattractions.net

May 22nd – Cantref Adventure Farm, Brecon Beacons

July 11th – Adventure Valley, Durham

October 3rd – Odds Farm Park, near Beaconsfield

Committee member news

A WARM welcome onto the NFAN committee to Colin Evans who, with his wife Gwen and children Rhys, 13, and Sian, 11, run Cantref Adventure Farm, Riding Centre, Bunkhouses and upland



sheep farm in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park, Mid Wales.

The Riding Centre was started about 45 years ago by Colin's mother and father, while the two bunkhouses were opened in 1993. The farm has sheep and is part of

Tir Gofal environmental scheme.

The Adventure Farm opened in 2004 on the back of FMD in 2001. It hosts around 45,000 visitors per annum and has many innovative rides. This year Cantref made a major investment in photo voltaic and ground source heat pumps to massively reduce its carbon footprint and make the business more sustainable long term.

New member benefits

WE'VE recently asked farm members what additional benefits they would like and can now present the current preferred top three.

You still have until mid April to complete the survey and we urge all members to have their vote!

Both in current first place, you told us you'd like either a new NFAN website or a visitor comparison benchmarking service and in third place is the Code of Guidance Open Days.

New format for NFAN awards

WE are changing the NFAN award format for 2012, giving you a choice of seven categories to enter. You can enter one or all of them! The choice is up to you.

- 1) Unsung Hero Award
- 2) Best Food and Beverage
- 3) Winning websites
- 4) Excellent customer service
- 5) Best in Education
- 6) Golden Supplier Award
- 7) Farm Attraction of the Year



Further information will be available at the end of April at www.farmattractions.net.

NFAN regional news

With thanks to Gillian Alexander, from Heads of Ayr Farm Park in Scotland, for providing this article

WE are now in our 19th year of opening and are looking forward to what we hope will be a busy season.



Last year, like many other attractions, we found our biggest challenge was the weather. We had a very promising start, including record numbers in April, followed by a disappointing August and an average September, much of which was due to poor weather.

Over the past couple of years we have added to our indoor play areas in order to make the park an all weather attraction. In 2007, we built a new indoor play barn 'Play n' Wild' with three giant drop slides and a seating area with vending machines. This was extended in 2009 to include a soft play area for all ages and a toddler play area and in 2010 we added a coffee bar. Last year we introduced 'Fowl Play,' an indoor air cannon game which has been a great success.

This season we are keeping our admission rate the same to hopefully encourage increased footfall. We are planning lots of PR and marketing activities to ensure we continually promote the park to attract as many visitors as possible and have also revamped our website and leaflets in the hope that it will impress potential customers.

There are a variety of farm attractions in Scotland and one of the major things which many have been doing is to utilise the customer trend towards healthy eating and locally sourced foods. There is a huge interest in farmers markets and farm shops and many farm attractions sell local food and drink on site which can add greatly to visitor experiences and increase spend.

We recently gained a Healthy Living Award which recognises our commitment to offer healthy eating choices for all our customers and we would be interested to hear what other parks are doing in this area as it is something we would like to drive forward over the coming season.

In 2013 we will be inviting NFAN members to visit us at an open day here in Ayrshire - shortbread and Whisky will be on offer...!

More news from our regional representatives will be published in future issue of *Network News*.

COULD you qualify for the Rural Economy Grant (REG)?

The £60 million REG has been established following the findings of Defra's Rural Economy Growth Review (launched in November 2011), which identified that large grants (of £25,000 to £1 million) are needed in key sectors to unlock significant rural economic growth potential.

How to apply

The application process includes two stages - Outline and Full.

Stage 1 - Outline Application ROUND 1, TO BE SUBMITTED BY 5.00pm on April 30th, 2012

This initial stage allows you to provide an outline of your project, detailing how you anticipate it will fit with the overall aims of the appropriate theme (farm competitiveness, agri-food, tourism, forestry and micro-enterprise), the need and demand for the investment and benefits of your project.

Stage 2 - Full Application ROUND 1 (subject to success at Outline stage)

Following submission of an Outline application, projects will be assessed and scored. A number of Outline applications which have scored well will be invited to bring forward Full applications.

Rural Economy Grant set up to help rural businesses

To help you complete your Outline application, we strongly advise you read the handbook guidance and relevant theme appendix for your project.

Please visit the following link for the handbook and applications forms:

<http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-economy-grant>.

For further information, please contact your area Defra RDPE office as follows:

East of England - 0300 060 0541
 East Midlands - 0300 060 2526
 North East - 0191 226 5436
 North West - 01228 640311
 South East - 01932 357083
 South West - 01392 266367 or 0300 060 4326
 West Midlands - 01905 768854
 Yorkshire and Humber - 0300 060 4459

Code of Practice nears completion

FOLLOWING an 18 month process, NFAN can confirm the Code of Practice 'for avoiding ill health when visiting farms and having contact with animals' is in the final stages.

Supported by HSE and HPA, the code has been put together by NFAN and other farming organisations. It is intended the industry code will eventually replace 'Guidance Note A1S23 and Guidance for Teachers.' However, these will be incorporated too until it does.

New Code information days

Once the code has been launched NFAN, along with HSE and AHVLA, will be holding information days for farm attractions. The first two will be held at Walby Farm Park in Carlisle and Mead Open Farm in Bedfordshire.

In the last six months, similar days have been held for over 300 environmental health officers. It is hoped the information days for farms will be equally useful.

Dates will be released soon, but please contact the NFAN office with any immediate queries.



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All general inquiries should be directed to the NFAN office using the contact details above.

Farm Attraction of the Year Awards 2011

THE NFAN Farm Attraction of the Year Awards for 2011 were presented during the organisation's 2012 conference in February.

In Category A (venues hosting 75,000 or more visitors) the winner was Willows Farm Village in Hertfordshire, with the joint runners-up being Fishers Adventure Farm Park in West Sussex and Rand Farm Park in Lincolnshire.

In Category B (venues hosting between 20,000 and 75,000 visitors) the winner was Marsh Farm in Essex. First runner-up was Park Hall, the Country-side Experience, in Shropshire, while the second runner-up was Blackberry Farm in East Sussex. Our congratulations to all our winners.



Adam Henson presents Lisa Fleckney from Marsh Farm with the Category B winner's certificate.

NFAN Volunteer Regional Representatives

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Helplines - free advice for NFAN members

PLEASE remember that our experts earn their livings through the expertise you are using. Please limit your free calls to one per annum. Thereafter, the experts can advise you further, subject to their terms of business. You will find them all prepared to offer special rates for NFAN members.

Planning Legislation and Business Rates

Barry Davies, Davies & Co. (Chartered Surveyors)

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Email: info@daviesandco.co.uk Website: www.daviesandco.co.uk

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Health & Safety/Environmental Health Guidance

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