

## Manor Farm - Cheshire

Saturation of self catering accommodation



### **BACKGROUND**

They have run the farm since 1990. It has 100 acres which is rented out to grow silage and maize, 12 acres of commercial poplars and there is a wildflower meadow operating under the Countryside Stewardship scheme. They also operate livery stables.

### **DIVERSIFICATION**

Diversification was necessary to supplement the income that could be derived from 100 acres. After trying rather unsuccessfully both a beef scheme and Christmas turkeys, they decided to open as a B&B in 1994. They did not receive any support at the time.

### **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

They offer three rooms which house five to six visitors and this represents approximately 60% of total farm income.

Business increased last year due to some construction works requiring weekly accommodation. Occupancy levels were between 50% and 62.5%.

### **MARKETING**

Quality is a selling point. Quality standards held include:



Members of FarmStayUK  
English Tourist Board - 4 diamonds  
Cheshire Farm accredited  
Farm Stay North West  
On the committee of 'Stay on a Farm' group

Markets include single business people, VFR for weddings and funerals. It's a stop off point for visitors to Wales and Scotland and attracts cyclists

between Land's End and John O'Groats.

### **USE OF LOCAL PRODUCE**

They try to use local food but don't make it a feature. They could do so in the future but "it's time consuming making bread". Local crafts don't feature.

Marketing activity includes leaflets (acquired through FarmStayUK membership) and advertising in "Stillwells", ramblers magazines, "VisitBritain" brochure, "Best Bed & breakfast". They ask visitors where they have seen the adverts and change from year to year depending on feedback.

They use a computer for storing information as well as a hard copy book for bookings.

They received good advice from Business Link who helped them to upgrade computers, brochures and marketing ideas.

### **INVOLVEMENT WITH NWFTI**

They are aware of NWFTI and John Dickinson has attended meetings of FarmStayUK.

They see the strengths of NWFTI as giving help to farmers who are prepared to listen and to take advice. However, it is important that NWFTI are there at the beginning of the project.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

Future plans include a gradual scaling down of B&B and becoming more selective.

They have planning for self-catering chalets and might go ahead with them if they receive funding.

Major issues facing their business is an over-saturation of self-catering cottages and B&B's and too many travel lodges. Feels that planning permission should be relaxed in Cheshire. The county needs something to keep people in the area rather than passing through.