



With the North West recording a bumper crop of visitors year on year, conditions have never been better for this region's farmers to take a serious look at potential diversification into this growing market.

VisitBritain – Sightseeing in UK 2002

Farm attractions visits up 46%

Farm attractions revenue up 35%

© Midge Todhunter 2004

FARMERS considering diversification into tourism should log-on to www.farmtourism-matter.org to find out more about free advice and support services in their area. This newly created website is designed to help farmers with access to grants, ongoing support and advice. Hit **JOIN** to register for regular update

Three area partners (see opposite) will deliver North West Farm Tourism Initiative with a recently agreed funding of £2.68m from the North West Development Agency. Their joint mission is to develop and expand farm tourism businesses across the North West region, ensuring farm tourism plays an important role for many years to come.

Experienced contacts in your area, already working on farm tourism projects:



Katie Burton
Cumbria Tourist Board
015394 40428
kburton@gocumbria.org



John Dickinson
Cumbria Rural Enterprise
Agency
01942 493415
farmtourism@btinternet.com



Carl Bendelow
Cumbria Rural Enterprise
Agency
01768 891414
carl@crea.co.uk

Cheshire dairy farmers Richard and Anne Arden are taking steps to upgrade the bed & breakfast side of their farm business, with a little help from the North West Farm Tourism Initiative.



Richard and Anne Arden have provided traditional farmhouse accommodation for more than 10 years. Members of both Farmstay UK and the North West Tourist Board, they could see that in order to keep up with standards now expected by guests - they would need more of bedrooms with en-suite facilities.

Their Newton Hall 16th century farm covers 138 acres of rural Cheshire. Until recently their core farm income was milk production. But with the economics of dairy farming continuing to provide poor returns, they are looking to boost other income streams, while still remaining as farmers of their land.

An approach for support was made after an initial visit from farm tourism adviser John Dickinson. A successful **FARM TOURISM INITIATIVE** capital grant application followed, with an award of 30% of project costs to help with funding of the improvements and up-grade of facilities.

The aim is to provide improved accommodation with increase occupancy rates and better profitability, ensuring Richard and Anne can remain both in farming, and tourism.

John Dickinson said: "Up-grading their facilities will increase room bookings and profitability, making the remaining farming activities more sustainable. The North West Farm Tourism Initiative has provided the Arden family with support and business advice, and assistance with the grant application."

CTB newsletter

A comprehensive guide to farm holidays in Cumbria is one of the main features of www.golakes.co.uk the newly revamped Cumbria Tourist Board's website. This new section has contact details of farm accommodation, on-farm food and drink specialists, and farm attractions throughout the area. It's Time To Take The Initiative:

North West Farm Tourism Initiative delivers free advice through a team of professionals covering business development, marketing and training. Financial assistance comes through a small capital grant and marketing grant scheme, and are open to diversification schemes developed by businesses that manage agricultural land. Projects must demonstrate a high standard of innovation, quality and excellence, as well as increase operator income or create jobs. This type of activity adds real value to the whole tourism product of the region, and will help ensure a prosperous future in farm tourism for many generations to come.

Realising the potential:

The initiative has identified three key development sectors:

Food & Drink eg:-

Yew Tree Farm at Rosthwaite, Borrowdale was one of the first beneficiaries of the scheme by winning a marketing grant to promote a new selection of Herdwick meat meals called: *"Meat worthy of its Origin"*. Celebrity chefs including Rick Stein will be creating recipes for the range of ready meals. These will be available from the farm or can be ordered on-line, as well as being served in the Flock Inn tea shop.

Activity Tourism

Matthew Robinson has a 161 hectares dairy and sheep farm near Kendal. The existing tourism business is an activity centre established four years ago, and offers both

traditional and modern outdoor pursuits as well as providing a venue for corporate team building events. The current 'port-a-loos' are unacceptable for visitors and the farmhouse kitchen has out grown the catering requirements of large groups. Grant funding is essential for the business to maintain its high quality, and a marketing grant will launch a new concept "The Lakeland Experience"; this new package offers exciting outdoor activities alongside good accommodation and eating experiences.

"Learn how to Holidays"

The future looks more certain for Low Hall Farm at Kirby-in-Furness near Barrow, after it won financial backing for a new bed and breakfast venture. "This grant is very important to us" says Paula Pye "We're a dairy farm and it looks like milk prices will go down further. Our survival depends on the further development of our tourism enterprise.

The new bed and breakfast and small caravan site will provide accommodation for hobby farmers attending our new courses.

Develop niche market opportunities

Field End Farm near Kendal runs to 220 acres with 300 ewes. There are five very spacious cottages grouped around the original farm buildings and yard. As well as four apartments within a listed Georgian mansion dating 1796. These nationally inspected properties are rated at three and four stars. They accommodate up to sixty people at any one time. Investment of the marketing grant has created the opportunity to diversify into the wedding and corporate markets.

Plan for the future:

Making it effortless for customers is the key and the Internet is at the heart of this delivery. We will ensure the farm tourism

product is part of these information channels, providing easy to access and informative visitor information on-line. We aim to make it easy for customers to book: whether they want to select independent components: e.g. a picnic delivery service, fresh farm produce, a farm trail, a fly fishing course, horse holidays, a round of golf; or the exclusive luxury of a period farmhouse, or buy a package. This can be achieved through the Cumbria Tourist Board web site www.golakes.co.uk/farmholidays. On-line booking will be available twenty-four hours a day. All farm tourism operators will receive an application form shortly to take part in this exciting new promotional initiative.

For details contact Katie Burton: Farm & Rural Tourism Development Officer, 015394 40428 kburton@gocumbria.org

Or go to www.visitbritain.com

**Visit Britain's UK Industry
Update Market Intelligence,
Advice & Latest Industry News for
International & Domestic
Marketing**

the north west
farm
tourism initiative

for further info

the north west
farm tourism initiative
Ashleigh, Holly Road, Windermere
Cumbria LA23 2AQ

telephone **015394 44444**

fax 015394 44041

email mail@nwfarminitiative.co.uk
www.nwfarminitiative.co.uk

CTB

FREE: Professional Online Marketing Support from Cumbria Tourist Board

HERE are 20 questions on the current online promotion of your business. If you answer 'no' to any of the questions; if you are about to set-up a website; or even if you are simply bamboozled by the internet - contact Mike Andrew at CTB to arrange a free consultation to explain everything - in plain, jargon-free language. So go on...maximize your business online potential.

1. Do you already own a website?
2. Do you have a short, snappy, relevant domain name, which doesn't advertise another company name, such as www.golakes.freeserve.co.uk?
3. Is your domain name registered in your name, or that of your website designer?
4. Do you use unique email addresses for each guide and website you advertise in? For example: ctbguide@golakes.co.uk, ctbweb@golakes.co.uk, ktaguide@golakes.co.uk
5. Is your site easy to navigate and does it include all the relevant information a visitor will need in order to decide to book with you?
6. Have you set up links back to your website on a number of other websites such as golakes.com & lastminutelakedistrict.com, etc?
7. If so, have you checked all of the links are correct and working?
8. Does your site contain unique page titles, descriptions and keywords?
9. If so, have you made the best use of those page titles to enable visitors to easily find your site in the major search engines?
10. Have you checked your site appears under the right search phrases in major search engines like google?
11. Do you receive detailed website statistics, which show the number of visitors to your site and also the number of referrals from other websites and search engines?
12. Is your site regularly submitted to major search engines and directories?
13. Do you make use of low cost pay-per-click advertising opportunities such as overture.com and adwords.com?
14. Do you use the google toolbar to help assess the performance of your website, or even to select other portal websites on which to advertise your business?
15. Do you regularly update your site's content and keep core information such as prices up to date?
16. Do you use, or have you considered using an online booking system?
17. Do you maintain an electronic database of email addresses?
18. Do you use these email addresses by sending out email newsletters about your business in order to generate repeat bookings?
19. Are you really making the most of your site's presence?
20. Would you like to receive FREE, professional, plain and non-technical ICT advice from Cumbria Tourist Board in order to help maximize your business' online marketing potential?



Please contact Mike Andrew (E-Tourism Advisor, Cumbria Tourist Board) on email at mjandrew@gocumbria.org, or telephone on 07766 985 992 for a free online marketing consultation.

Carl/ CREA



CUMBRIA TOURISM SKILLS AWARDS

Cumbria Farm Tourism operators also won prizes at the Tourism Awards ceremony held at Carlisle Racecourse on 18th November, where trophies were presented by TV personality Clarissa Dickinson Wright

Ann Carlyle from Bessietown Farm at Catlowdy won the excellence in service award and the owner of the business Margaret Sissons was nominated for the Tourism Ambassador Award. Margaret has won countless awards and is a good example of the farm tourism business. She is fanatical about sourcing local produce and is in the sixth year of a Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The whole team at Bessietown are wonderful ambassadors for farm tourism. www.bessiestown.co.uk

Sally Beamish at Brantwood, Coniston was nominated as a Unsung Hero. Sally and her team of gardeners and estate workers

manage the 250 Brantwood Estate in an innovative way. They are involved in tourism and land management so are the more unexpected side of farm tourism. www.brantwood.org.uk

PENTALK

Computer skills are a basic necessity to anyone involved in tourism but training is often difficult to fit in to a busy life managing a farm, family and tourism business. If you want to update your skills PENTALK in Penrith have produced a training manual for farmers, contact them on 01768 840500 for details. One to one training is available from Mike Andrew and Anne Quilter at the tourist board, contact them on 015394 44444. Your local CDC centre offers training courses in the rural areas, contact your nearest centre at www.pentalk.org

Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (CREA)

NINE rural business clients of CREA at Penrith – which delivers Cumbria Farm Tourism in their area - won through as finalists for the 25 categories in the Countryside Awards at a ceremony in Carlisle on Friday 23 January. The Oscar-style dinner of some 300 guests at Carlisle's Shepherd's Inn was compared by John Craven of BBC's Countryfile.

Five of the CREA businesses went on to win their category, including Horse Hire Holidays for best Farm Diversification Award; and Dawson's Farm Shop at Greystone House, Stainton, won three categories; the Farm Food Award; the Farm Conservation Award; and the highly prestigious Overall Award. Dawsons Farm Shop began in autumn 2001 with the aim of selling high quality food, and to educate the public about organic food and the countryside. Their farm shop, opened by DEFRA Minister Alun Michael, has rocketed

to success by offering honest homegrown food. It sells their own fresh organic meat, eggs, ready meals, and bakery produce. It also sells dairy produce, bread, fish, fruit and vegetables – both organic and convention. There is also a range of jams, chutneys, and other pre-packed provisions, and a tearoom with 24 covers. They also plan to build public access pathways to the farm to increase public knowledge of farming.

Horse Hire Holidays is the brainchild of Eleanor and James Irving who run a large sheep farm in the North Lakes near Uldale, close to the picturesque Overwater Tarn. After FMD they decided to diversify into a horse hire business, attracting tourists from all over Britain and abroad by skilful use of the worldwide web.

Packages are offered to hire a horse from their Stockdale Hall and ride freely across Cumbria's northern fells. The business has

been a great success and now has 12 professionally schooled horses for hire. Their four-day ride, which averages 10 miles per day, takes in Skiddaw – the fourth highest mountain in the Lake District, extensive views of Bassenthwaite Lake, and the cascading white water of Dash Falls. Enroute accommodation is in traditional farmhouses or B&B, and the horse care is pre-organised at each destination.

Carl Bendelow, who runs CREA's Farm Tourism, said: "This just goes to show how many of Cumbria's farms are making positive changes to their circumstances, and there's never been a better time than now." Carl added: "There is free advice and assistance available to all farm businesses, and there's also wealth of ideas afoot – it's all about making better use of your farm and assets, and growing more profit from your own resources."