

John Wales takes over as chair of Coach Tourism Association



New CTA chair John Wales (second from left) with new board members, from the left; Daniel Kirby, Colin Fawcus and Roger Bull.

The regeneration of a seaside favourite, the potential of the silver travel market and the rapid growth in outdoor countryside-themed events were key issues on the agenda for Coach Tourism Association members at its annual conference in Blackpool last month. The event also saw a change in the organisation's leadership with the election of John Wales, founder of Encore, as the new chair to replace Denise Bridges, Albatross Travel who stepped down after her three-year term.

The CTA board also has a number of new members with Daniel Kirby, Kirby's Coaches, Roger Bull, RB Travel and Colin Fawcus, DFDS Ferries joining, and existing board member, Robert Shaw of Harry Shaw takes over as vice-chair.

"I am delighted and honoured to be elected Chairman of the CTA having been a board member for over six years and involved in the industry since 1982, working in various aspects of the trade; a ferry company, tour operators, restaurants and latterly, the founder and CEO of Encore since 2000.

"The timing is perfect, now we have a new CEO in place at Encore, I have the increased capacity to dedicate to the role and over the next 3 months, along with the association's CEO Chris Wales (no relation), the new Vice-Chairman, Robert Shaw, I will be working with the board to devise the vision and strategy for the CTA, that will deliver a clear direction and increased value to members going forward."

Around 150 delegates gathered at the Imperial

Hotel for a series of presentations and a key buyer-supplier Workshop that involved more than 500 'speed-dating' appointments.

Philip Welsh, Visit Blackpool head of visitor economy outlined the long-term repositioning of the destination to attract visitors on a year-round basis, and reported a number of key developments including a new £25million conference centre, a £16million rollercoaster at the Pleasure Beach, investment in Blackpool Tower, the Winter Gardens, an IMAX cinema and a number of new prestige hotels arriving in the town.

Blackpool currently has a total of 18 million visitors per year who generated £1.496 billion within the local economy and supported over 25,000 jobs.

Turning to the countryside, delegates were treated to a live Q&A session from BBC Countryfile's Anita Rani with producer of the Countryfile Live show Tim Etchells. A major group attraction, Countryfile Live will be held once again this year at Blenheim Palace in August.

Members also learned about the importance of the over 50's market from Silver Travel Advisor's Debbie Marshall and were updated on forthcoming emission legislation and Clean Air Zones by CPT's Simon Smith.

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