

DIOCESE OF HEREFORD For immediate release 11th February

Major Tourism Conference for West Midlands

Plans are already in place for a major Church Tourism Conference on 25th April 2013 in Herefordshire. Leominster Priory will be the central venue for the event which is being advertised to churches and tourism organisations across the country. Workshops will also use other nearby heritage buildings.

“The Diocese of Hereford, which covers half of Shropshire and parts of Wales and Worcestershire is very much at the forefront of Church Tourism, because we have such an amazing collection of stunning churches but we have been encouraging churches to cater for the tourists and visitors to this region for several years now,” said Wendy Coombey, Community Partnership and Funding Officer for the Diocese and one of the main organisers.

Speakers are already being booked with church members and others being invited to turn up and learn more about how your church can attract and look after visitors through a variety of exciting and informative workshops. They include Visitor Welcome, Church Security, Parish Stories and Case Studies, Promoting and Marketing Your Church, How to Research Family History and the attraction of churchyards. The Keynote Speaker is Professor Terry Stevens.

Professor Terry Stevens is the Founder and principal of the international, multi-award winning tourism consultancy, Stevens & Associates. The consultancy was established 25 years ago and has worked in over 40 countries. Clients include international development and aid agencies, national and local governments as well as a wide range of private sector businesses. Terry is Patron of the Church Tourism Network in Wales and has recently, advised the Church in Wales on alternative uses for redundant churches. He is widely acknowledged as an innovative thinker who challenges traditional ways of working in tourism.

His keynote speech will examine market trends, highlight the importance of innovative thinking and he will dare the audience to think and act differently if we are to succeed in capturing the imagination and interest of our audiences in the future.

“We are very fortunate in having Professor Terry Stevens as our keynote speaker as well as other leading figures from the tourism sector. The Conference, Small Things BIG Difference, is aimed at helping churches make small changes in and around their buildings which will enhance the visit for all the people that visit the region annually,” said Wendy. “Churches are part of the tourism industry whether they like it or not, so we have decided that we *do* like it and are doing what we can across the region to make things happen.”

Latest available figures show 10.6 million people visiting Shropshire annually and spending £561 million pounds. In Herefordshire, visitors number nearly 6 million spending more than £250 million pounds. Worcestershire welcomes nearly 12 million visitors bringing in more than £500 million pounds to the local economy.

The Conference Small Things BIG Difference takes place in and around Leominster Priory on 25th April 2013 from 9.30 to 4pm. It will also include using the historic Forbury Chapel, now a meeting venue, and Grange Court, one of the oldest buildings in the market town after the Priory, which dates from 660AD.

Note to editors: Please contact Anni Holden below for more information and to arrange interviews.