



Mary Street  
Longtown  
Carlisle, Cumbria  
CA6 5UG

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Market Town Initiative supports area's tourism**

Longtown Market Town Initiative is supporting the local tourism industry with informal workshops and training sessions ahead of the new season. These focus on giving accommodation providers and others in the sector a better knowledge of local history including the Border Reivers, Carlisle and Hadrian's Wall.

"We have been working with a network of local tourism businesses on joint marketing," explained Helen Sykes, Programme Manager with Longtown MTI, "and during those meetings it became apparent that there was scope to build on local knowledge – we don't always recognise the attractions of our own area. Being able to explain the history and point people at local sites and stories could encourage guests to spend more time in the area rather than seeing it as just a stop off on the way to the Lakes or Scotland."

The first workshop took place on Tuesday, 26 February and included a tour of Carlisle Castle and a session on Border Reivers legends and history with Ian Robson, a local guide working with Open Book Visitor Guiding and himself of Reiver's descent.

"Carlisle Castle has been witness to all the defining moments in history that have shaped the Borderlands since William I," said Ian. "It is always a delight when people join a guided tour and marvel at the grandeur of the building and its stories of historic events and famous people. And the Castle is only one on a long list of fascinating sites of heritage, culture and landscape on our doorstep."

The day also included a visit to the County Records Office, hosted by David Bowcock, and time for networking and discussion about how best to ensure that guests and visitors appreciate the fascinating, if slightly bloodthirsty, history of the area.

Margaret Sisson from Bessiestown is one of those accommodation providers who has been involved in the network: ""We tend to take the beauty and history of the area for granted but visits like this give me added enthusiasm and knowledge that I can share with our guests," she said.

Peter White, Executive Director of Development at the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), which funded Longtown MTI, said: "Longtown and its surroundings can boast wonderful attractions so it is excellent to see that the Market Town Initiative is inspiring the Cumbrian tourist industry to create an even better service for its visitors, especially during the county's busy Year of Adventure.

"The NWDA granted £1 million for the Longtown MTI to kick-start projects such as this which focus on the needs of local people and businesses and make a real difference to the regional economy. I hope others involved in the local tourism industry who have not already taken advantage of these free workshops will do so now."

Facilitator, Kay Dempsey, is organising the programme of workshops on behalf of the MTI: "The first session was an obvious theme to cover and we were pleased with the response from local businesses," she said. "The next session is on 4 March and will be based in Longtown with a visit to Arthuret Church and then a workshop on genealogy and the local facilities available for people tracing their family history. This is already a popular reason for Armstrongs, Grahams, Nixons and others to visit our area and we want to help tourism businesses to make the most of the opportunities."

A third session on Tuesday 11 March will look at how local businesses can attract walkers and cyclists to the area.

These workshops are open to anyone involved in the tourism sector in and around Longtown and are free of charge. For further information please contact Kay on 01900 829560 or call the Longtown Market Town Initiative office on 01228 792778.

## **ENDS**



From left to right  
Phil Marlow, Pam Copeland, Zara Thomlinson,  
Ian Robson (Guide from Open Book Visitor  
Guiding), Barbara Thomlinson and Joy Davidson  
at the Cursing Stone in the underpass between  
Tullie House and Carlisle Castle during the tour  
on 26 February.

## **Editor's notes**

Longtown Market Town Initiative is a partnership between the Longtown and District Enterprise Trust and Carlisle City Council. In 2005, it was awarded £1 million by Northwest Regional Development Agency to implement a regeneration programme, focused on helping existing businesses to develop and grow and on enabling individuals in the area to improve their earning potential.



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