

## **Rural Accommodation - Innovation, Trends, Characterful Stays**

In this session, we had three different but interrelated presentations on rural accommodation. The three speakers all highlighted that rural accommodation providers should focus more on marketing and promotion and find a way to maximise their spending, provide high quality, more innovative customer centred products and services to stay competitive.

**Lindsay Rae**, Growing and Developing the Visitor Economy within Derbyshire

Lindsay Rae introduced the 'Growing and Developing the Visitor Economy within Derbyshire' project which is funded by European Regional Growth Fund (ERDF). The project highlights the importance of innovation in rural tourism and provides business support programmes to boost the region's SME competitiveness in the international market. The programme helps rural accommodation providers raise awareness of accessibility, improve their understanding of international markets, and enhance their marketing and promotion by developing social media marketing skills. They are encouraged to adopt a regional brand, "Inspired by the Peak District", and provide new opportunities through innovative initiatives such as the Pedal Peak District Business Initiative.

**Steph Curtis-Raleigh** - editor, International Glamping Business Magazine

### **Glamping: a maturing market**

Steph Curtis-Raleigh gave delegates a useful overview of the glamping sector. She explained the rapid development of glamping, the wide range of products, the current trends and emergence of innovation. There were questions about the appropriateness of the term 'glamping', issues of planning, and how to stay ahead of the increasing competition through innovative product development.

**Andy Woodward**, MTMI

### **Maximising Your Group Potential!**

Andy Woodward highlighted that rural accommodation providers should maximise their marketing spending by using 'other people's money' to stay competitive in the market. Andy explained how Farmstay UK brought benefits to its membership by working with big brands and providing prizes for customers of these companies. He emphasised that these prizes should suit the customers' needs and wants (e.g. gift tokens with case value, smaller vouchers that allow multiple trips/uses).