

Article 1 Published on Thursday 27 September 2012

Berwick takes its place at Euro walled towns meeting

BERWICK was represented at the European Walled Towns Association's AGM in Gmund, Austria last week thanks to help from Arch, the regeneration arm of Northumberland County Council which part-financed the cost.

Margaret Shaw, who was at a EWTA conference in Malta in May, was again in attendance to see what **benefits** membership of the association can bring Berwick.

Gmund is a small medieval walled town in Southern Austria with similarities to Berwick. It was built as a fortified market town to protect significant trade routes. It has a population who are passionate about the protection and upkeep of its architectural and cultural heritage. It has been highlighted as a best practice example of sustainable development.

The programme provided delegates with the opportunity to witness the large-scale renovation projects which have been aimed at preserving the town's flair and ambience, while protecting its historic structure in an innovative way.

Berwick had a say in the selection of the secretariat for the next three years, currently Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands as well as the opportunity to set up linked projects and apply for European and other funds with other member towns.

The annual membership fee of £170 was covered by Cittaslow Berwick which, with help from Arthur Wood and Northumberland County Council, made a three year funding pledge.

<http://www.berwick-advertiser.co.uk/news/local-headlines/berwick-takes-its-place-at-euro-walled-towns-meeting-1-2549478>

Article 2 Published on Tuesday 16 October 2012

Walled town status can pay dividend

BERWICK couple Bernard and Margaret Shaw recently represented the town at the AGM of the European Walled Towns Association in Gmund, Austria.

The trip was funded thanks to Arch, the regeneration arm of Northumberland County Council.

The medieval town of Gmund with a population of 3,000 is identified as being the cultural centre for the region offering holidays for the whole family by linking the town with its immediate natural environment.

It has not always been held in such high regard, however. At one time it identified itself as being rural and remote with no major cities or universities close by. Having low income levels and high levels of unemployment with young people having to leave the town for work or for higher education.

A decision to pursue 'cultural tourism' was accepted and a brand created. There would need to be a diversity of offer but the offer would need to be of a consistently high standard and that specific and specialised marketing would be required.

Bernard and Margaret said: "To guide Gmund through this maze of ambition and obstacles the post of general manager for the cultural initiative of Gmund was created.

"That the manager and her team have succeeded is clearly obvious to all visitors."

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