

Frome - 17th September 2009

### Tour of Britain Start from a Tourism Perspective

Having a nationally televised event in your town can only be a good thing in terms of profile raising, especially for a town without an obvious draw like an Abbey or Cathedral. Seeing Frome, however briefly, on ITV 4, was something to look forward to.

Throughout the planning we were working on a ball park figure of 6-10,000 visitors, based on previous stage start towns. However the term visitors needs to be qualified. We made contact with a broader range of Accommodation than that in our guide knowing we only have around 500 serviced bed spaces. While our accommodation was busy it was not packed to capacity by thousands of visitors following the Tour. In fact it is apparent that the majority of visitors on the day were local people and day trippers coming to their local stage.

The town put on a range of events the evening before the race and it was remarked by a number of those involved in the race planning that Frome had done more than many other towns. This provided added opportunities for promotion e.g. South West Stage promotional events at local M5 services where Frome was heavily featured because of the event programme. This really seems to have paid off with really positive feedback and great crowds on the night.

It was the perfect springboard for race day. It was apparent from the experience of other Tourist Information Centres in start towns that the crowds were unlikely to come to us so we made the decision early on to go to them. We have a fairly large group of volunteer staff who were drafted in for an early start. We made up cycling / walking information packs on the Frome area and along with 1000 Thundersticks from County we took them out onto the streets. Everything went in the space of two hours, along with advice and information in response to any questions about the race, Frome or anything else we were asked. The packs were targeted at visitors rather than locals and included the Frome Accommodation guide in the hope that people visiting Frome for the first time might be tempted back in future, anecdotal evidence from visitors suggests this may well happen.

The atmosphere and the crowds were fantastic. It was a truly spectacular sight seeing 100 riders and associated support vehicles sweeping through town cheered on by packed spectators (and perfect weather helped!).

Sitting looking at an empty car park (at 3pm on race day) it is hard to believe that such a large event can come and go in such a short space of time. Obviously it is too early to tell as far as long term benefits go but the race certainly made a positive impression on the town while it was here.

Manager Frome TIC