



## WROXHAM BARNES Hoveton, Norfolk

**Assessor: Stephen Barratt**  
**Date of Visit: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

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The following report relates to the quality assessment Wroxham Barns under the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS). The report details the findings of the assessment, as discussed during the de-brief on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2006 with Ian Russell, Director. The attraction merits the award of the accreditation of '**Quality Assured Visitor Attraction**'.

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### **Pre-Arrival and Arrival**

#### Telephone Enquiries

Three telephone calls were made from a potential visitor viewpoint prior to arrival to establish routine information concerning opening times, admission charges, catering facilities, time to allow for a visit and directions to site. All calls made to telephone number 01603 783911

- 1<sup>st</sup> call was made on 8<sup>th</sup> December "during working hours" at 9.45am was answered after 4 rings by a recorded message with the female voice giving some detailed information on opening hours, entrance costs, catering on site, directions, special events and advice to visit the attractions website.
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> call was made on 11<sup>th</sup> December "during normal working hours" at 11.20pm. The call was answered by the same recorded message as the 1<sup>st</sup> call detailed above.
- A 3<sup>rd</sup> call was made on the 12<sup>th</sup> December "out of normal working hours" at 7.45am. The call was answered by the same recorded message as detailed for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> calls above.

Overall, a good deal of information is included in the recorded message but the quality of the voice recording was poor. In addition, consideration could be given to starting the message with a "Welcome to ....." and finishing with a "Thank you for the enquiry.....".

The planned improvements to the current telephone answering system will be of great benefit as discussed and in particular the option to speak to a staff member.

#### Leaflets

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The very good and attractive glossy “taster” leaflet is informative and well presented with excellent use of colour, pictures and photographs and with the opportunity well taken to promote the Fun Fair, Junior Farm and Christmas at Wroxham Barns.

Consideration could be given to include a “Site Plan”, either as a separate sheet or as an integral part of the taster leaflet.

### Website

The property information on the website was reached via [www.wroxham-barns.co.uk](http://www.wroxham-barns.co.uk) and was found to be of a good overall quality standard with regard to general information but with some areas such as the information on the catering provision and general shopping being of and excellent standard.

The site lacks a bit with regard to visual impact and some information on any events and arrangements for Christmas visitors could be considered. In addition, maintaining an update on the planned improvements could be considered together with the provision of some links to similar VAQAS recognised attractions and including the VAQAS logo on the home page of the site.

### Arrival

Wroxham Barns benefits from some useful tourist directional signs on local roads and the entrance to the attraction is clearly defined from the road but first Impressions on arrival could be enhanced by use being made of appropriate welcome and taster signs on the driveway and a “thank you for visiting” type sign on exit together with some directional signs back to Wroxham and North Walsham.

The overall quality standards of both car parks were very good with the undefined loose and practical surface maintained in a very neat and tidy condition.

The general appearance of the grounds was in accord with the style of the attraction being very well maintained and pleasing to the eye with some excellent use of shrubs, hanging baskets and flower borders noted given the time of year. Plans to redress some of the walkways and introduce more brick weave surfaces are in hand for this year as are plans to improve wheelchair access in some areas.

### Entry

No designated reception or information point evident but the provision of an excellent high quality and prominent sign listing all the traders is well located close to the entrance. Consideration could be given to providing appropriate means to dispense site plans and visitor information from this area as discussed.

### **Attraction**

Overall, Wroxham Barns is a high quality attraction with few obvious quality issues

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and the following comments reflect aspects of fine-tuning only made at the time of the assessment: -

- Make use of both sides of any “A” boards such as those giving directions to car parks.
- Provide some sales information on the iron benches / seating in the courtyard area.
- The provision of some interpretation on the machinery located around the site i.e. the fruit press outside the office.
- The area around the fun fair appears not to be maintained to the high standards achieved generally throughout the site and some appropriate screening could be considered when this facility is closed / out of season.
- Encourage all workshops to use the same excellent “Wroxham Barns” logo carrier bags.
- Include the restaurant name with the menu which is displayed above the exit doors to the gift shop.

Since last reported on, the attraction has benefited greatly following the introduction of Le Grice Roses and the Fashion Room which has increased the visitor sales options. In addition, the refurbished lavender Room and Old Barn Restaurant, together with some new signage and fencing has further increased the overall quality of the attraction.

Plans to further develop the Junior Farm, introduce additional courtyard seating with heating and provide more picnic facilities are in hand for 2007.

### **Staff.**

Generally, all workshop staff members encountered were professional in both appearance and attitude and keen to offer advice and help when approached. In addition, some good sales opportunities also being taken in all workshops visited (95% of those open) and in particular with regard to Norfolk Apple Juices Ltd.

### **Toilets**

Public toilets were visited and assessed and found to be maintained in a generally clean and tidy condition when checked at 11.30pm and again at 12.30pm on the day. Good practical quality with regard to all fixtures and fittings has been achieved with only minor wear and tear evident.

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Consideration could be given to the provision of plugs for all washbasins and moving the clothes hooks in the cubicles to a more convenient location such as behind the doors rather than above the toilet roll holders. In addition, better use could be made of the wall space by the provision of appropriate marketing and information panels as discussed.

### **Catering**

Overall, the Old Barn restaurant operates at a much higher quality level than the average attraction and exceeded expectations in some areas. The more practical Coffee Shop located in front of the Old Barn Restaurant is not as well presented and there may be some benefit in reducing the quality gap between the two facilities under these circumstances.

Menu options included some good imagination and flair and were well displayed on tables and chalk boards. The visitor's food choice was served plated and at an appropriate temperature with very good traditional flavour combinations. The overall quality of the lunch was very good with obvious attention applied to the use of fresh ingredients and food presentation on the plate benefited from the provision of some appropriate garnish.

An excellent staff uniform of dress noted which greatly enhanced first impressions with all staff portraying a friendly and professional approach to their work. In addition, good supervision of staff noted on this very busy day with some good trade skills demonstrated and in particular the general attitude and social skills of staff members which was commendable in these circumstances.

The dining room was well furnished and equipped in accord with style of operation with a degree of quality provided to the overall dining environment, which also benefited from well presented tables and effective cleaning between diners. However, despite the best use having been made of free space, ease of movement around the restaurant was slightly restricted and labelling the cakes etc displayed under the clear plastic cloches could be considered.

### **Retailing / Sales**

All workshops and the gift shops were well presented and stocked in accord to the style of attraction with good general access around the display stands noted together with friendly service from staff members on the tills.

Some good overall attention paid to appropriate lighting and the level of maintenance to décor etc was generally very good.

### **Key Observations**

The following points represent the key observations from this year's assessment: -

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- The on going improvements and investment in Wroxham Barns is impressive.
- Improvements to the handling of telephone enquiries and some fine tuning of the website.
- Albeit the fun fair was closed for the season, the general appearance of the area around this facility was seen as a weaker area and lacked the attention to detail applied to the remainder of the site.
- The provision of some additional signage on entry and exit as detailed above.
- The quality gap with regard to the appearance of the Old Barn Restaurant and the more practical Coffee Shop could be reduced.
- Not all workshops using the attractive Wroxham Barns carrier bags.

### General Observations

Wroxham Barns continues to offer the visitor an overall very high quality leisure shopping experience with many aspects of the attraction either meeting or bordering on the excellent quality level.

However, further fine-tuning of quality standards in some areas of the attraction, as detailed in the above report, could also be adopted, to further enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience as discussed in detail on the day.

Wroxham Barns fully merits the continued award of VisitBritain's accreditation of 'Quality Assured Visitor Attraction'.