The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism Association (WVFDTA) has appointed Maureen McAllister as its first tourism chief.

Maureen takes on the role of executive director, a post created to lead the Association and its 350 members, expand its reach and create opportunities to promote the area as one of the UK’s leading leisure, holiday and food destinations.

The appointment follows a string of successes for the association, which until now was essentially a voluntary organisation. A recently-appointed board of directors has successfully forged new partnership arrangements with both the Forest of Dean District Council and Monmouthshire County Council to secure funding. The team also won a coveted Tourism Business of the Year award for 2014, and has enjoyed a significant amount of national and international media coverage since employing a public relation agency eight months ago.

Caroline Anderson, chair of the association, said: “Tourism in the Forest of Dean and Monmouthshire contributes £141.5 million and £158.1 respectively to the local economies, so Maureen’s appointment is critical to the region’s future. Maureen has vast experience in the industry and will work with the board and our members to develop tourism in the area.”

Maureen has held high-profile destination management positions in Gloucester, Birmingham, the English Riviera and latterly led the tourism and culture agenda for the South West Regional Development Agency. She also runs a tourism consultancy, McAllister and Co, which has worked with leading destinations to develop their marketing and business strategies.

Maureen McAllister says: “The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley is a stunning part of the world, with great attractions, culture, history and food heritage. It’s the perfect area for everyone from families to adventurers – people who want to experience the joys of the countryside. After spending 10 years in Gloucester, it is like coming home to find a new set of experiences to tell the world about.”

WVFDTA members include tourist attractions, accommodation providers, outdoor activities, food producers, events and services. The Association delivers four key functions:
1. To represent the local tourism industry at local and national level
2. To promote and raise the profile of Wye Valley and Forest of Dean
3. To support members to improve and market their businesses
4. To enable member businesses to work together

Any tourism business interested in being part of the association should visit www.wyedeantourism.co.uk or contact info@wyedeantourism.co.uk.

Ends

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