

### **Application for Funding for the Artisan Cheese Fair**

The Melton Mowbray Area has a long association with cheese. Thomas Cromwell, Chief Minister to Henry VIII was sent a present of a fine cheese from the Canon of Launde Abbey in the hope of currying favour and so preventing the dissolution of the Abbey. He was unsuccessful. In 1685 the sister of the Countess of Rutland wrote thanking her sister for a present of a cheese "Lord Dorset says never was so good made in England before." But it was the production of Stilton, originating in the Melton Mowbray Area which established the reputation of the area for producing the King of Cheeses. At the moment all Stilton production takes place within 10 miles of Melton Mowbray. This however is under threat from the village of Stilton which has lodged an application to Defra for the area of origin of production to be shifted to Stilton. This could do immense damage to not only the local Stilton cheesemakers, a £60m business but also to our tourism industry said to be worth almost £70m and heavily based on our food heritage.

The Artisan Cheese Fair was launched to celebrate Melton's link with cheese and also, because of the involvement of the Stilton Dairies (SCA) in the fair, to defend the link of Stilton with Melton. The SCA contributes £6,000 to the cost of the fair.

This year we have already secured 46 cheesemakers and a further 30 producers as exhibitors to the fair. We are confident of reaching our target of 50 cheesemakers and of being the UK's largest cheese fair in terms of number of cheesemakers attending an event and selling direct to the public in only our 4<sup>th</sup> year. We will be easily larger than the British Cheese Festival. Last year we attracted over 7,000 visitors which benefitted enormously the town as we do not allow cooking at the fair which encourages visitors to use the many cafés, pubs and other eateries in the town. We are confident that the fair will also attract a significant number of overnight visitors to the area benefitting our hotels and other accommodation.

We are due to spend roughly £7,000 on a regional marketing campaign to promote the fair and also Melton Mowbray's connection with food. As a once-off we would like also to run a national promotion campaign to raise the level of awareness in the national media for the event and Melton Mowbray's connection with cheese. This will cost £8,000 in addition to the £7000 regional spend. The Melton Mowbray Food Partnership is a not for profit organisation and for this national campaign we will need to find funding from other sources. We have been granted £2,000 from the Melton BID and so are applying to Melton Borough Council for funding as well.

As a once-off we would like to apply to Melton Borough Council for a grant or underwrite of £6000 to help us secure that national coverage of the cheese fair and Melton's historic links with Britain's finest cheese. We've included MBC on the flier.

Matthew O'Callaghan: Chairman Melton Mowbray Food Partnership