

Business

Supporting Business and Enterprise

Amy Fenton
Business Editor

Twitter: @amyfentonNWEM
email: amy.fenton@nwemail.co.uk



Tourism



NEW BRAND The Laura Ashley Belsfield Hotel in Bowness

Laura Ashley brand eyes hotel venture

ONE of Britain's most iconic retail brands is branching out into tourism with the opening of a hotel in the Lakes.

Laura Ashley launched its second boutique hotel this week at the Belsfield in Bowness.

The Belsfield Hotel has partnered with Laura Ashley in an association that has seen the grand Victorian property undergo a multi-million pound refurbishment and branded as a Laura Ashley hotel.

The partnership is a licensing agreement in which Laura Ashley has provided its professional interior design service, using its world-renowned Home collections, for a complete renovation of the hotel.

The Belsfield, which has 62 bedrooms, continues to be operated by the Corus Hotels group.

Results

Centrica profits fall

ENERGY giant Centrica has revealed a slump in profits in its latest financial results.

The company, which operates the gas terminals in Barrow, said reduced earnings reflected a challenging market environment and mild weather in the UK.

The results show revenue increased by £2bn to £15.7bn and operating profit was down to £1.032bn from £1.583bn.

Basic Earnings Per Share went down to 10.5p from 14.8p and the interim dividend per share is 5.10p, up from 4.92p.

Chairman Rick Haythornthwaite said the company was "taking the steps to position the business for growth in 2015 and beyond".

Energy



DUAL USE Sheep can still graze the land under the floor-mounted solar panels, which Kinetica Energy hopes to install on farmland at Roanhead Farm near Barrow

Solar plans could harvest power of sun on farmland

MORE than 30,000 solar panels could be installed on farmland and generate enough electricity to power 1,500 homes.

Kinetica Energy has submitted an application to Barrow Borough Council to build a solar farm on land being leased from Roanhead Farm.

The panels, which would measure 1.6 metres by 1m, would generate electricity using the power of the sun. Kinetica would then sell the energy to the National Grid.

Charlie Young, senior project manager at Kinetica, said the company would be looking to start construction as soon as possible if permission is granted.

He said: "Roanhead Farm is an ideal site due to the screening of the proposed development by the surrounding landscape features.

"We have had to consider the development layout to ensure that there is no impact on the neighbouring Sandscale dunes. With no footpaths or public rights of way near the site it won't be possible to view the development from nearby.

"Due to the low reflectivity of the proposed panels, there is no concerns about the develop-

ment from the nearby airfield."

Mr Young said the vast majority of England's coast was suitable for solar panels and Kinetica scour the country looking for potential sites before seeking to lease the land from the owner.

He said: "Kinetica Solar's searches identify areas which have grid connection availability, are not visually obtrusive, have good access, are not near to national designations, don't have any footpaths on them and are on lower-quality agricultural land."

The land used for the Roanhead solar farm will also still be available for farm use if the council grants permission as sheep are able to graze underneath the panels.

Although the Roanhead development would be Kinetica's first in Cumbria, Mr Young revealed it was unlikely any future projects would be forthcoming.

He added: "This is our first solar project in Cumbria, and due to the constraints on the electricity network from wind turbines in the area, there is not much capacity for future medium-sized schemes such as this."

Money



ROB CAIRNS

Credit union banks on new volunteers

A CREDIT union is recruiting volunteers to man two new branches.

Barrow and District Credit Union is looking to expand by opening two branches in Ulverston and Grange.

With premises already secured thanks to Ulverston Town Hall and Barclays Bank in Grange, the union is now in need of volunteers.

Credit union chairman Rob Cairns said: "As we are run by volunteers, we need volunteers from both these towns to man the offices.

"We are therefore making a plea for volunteers from these areas."

Barrow and District Credit Union was set up in 2012 in response to the need for low-interest loans and savings schemes.

Earlier this year, the credit union expanded to include Ulverston, Grange and Cartmel.

The union has also signed a deal with Barclays which will allow savers to open basic current accounts.

The deal means that savers with the credit union, who may otherwise have been prevented from opening a typical bank account because of a poor credit rating, will be able to have a debit card and set up direct debits and standing orders.

Anyone who is interested in joining the volunteer team at the Ulverston or Grange branch, is asked to email jonbalm@barrowdistrictcu.co.uk or call the Credit Union's Barrow office based at The Mall on 01229 870110 for more information.



'IDEAL SITE' Charlie Young, senior project manager at Kinetica Energy

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