



BUSINESS STATEMENT in support of an application for

THE VARIATION OF CONDITION 4 FROM PLANNING PERMISSION 3/2018/0368 TO ALLOW 100 WEDDINGS/EVENTS PER YEAR AT THE OUT BARN, CLOUGH BOTTOM.



September 2024

Company No: 11964362  
[www.cloughbottom.co.uk](http://www.cloughbottom.co.uk)



The Out Barn Ltd  
Clough Bottom  
Bashall Eaves  
BB7 3NA



## The Out Barn

Ribble Valley boasts some of the best wedding venues of all shapes and sizes, they are equally supported by some of the best wedding related businesses in the UK. This has been as a result of the 2014 pioneering programme lead by Tom Pridmore, Ribble Valley Tourism Officer and the strategic plan of Ribble Valley Council's Wedding Heaven to make "Ribble Valley a premier wedding destination". This has put the beautiful Ribble Valley on the tourism map increasing tourist numbers and adding millions of pounds to the local economy. Once seen Ribble Valley is never forgotten and many visitors return to discover the other things the Ribble Valley has to offer – its food trail, food festivals, amazing gastro pubs, scenic walks, hotels/pubs and self-catering accommodation. The Out Barn has been a member of the Ribble Valley Wedding Heaven since its introduction in 2014.

In 1991, the owners had a vision of breathing new life into the redundant old stone barns by sympathetically restoring them into functions and educational buildings ensuring they were in harmony with the area and in line with the farm's conservation and sustainable working practices. In 1995/96 approvals were granted to allow the Out Barn to be converted as a functions and corporate training centre. Many years later on the back of its successful venture in organising and holding training course the site ran its first wedding in December 2009. In 2015 approval was granted to vary the planning permission to allow the formal use of the venue for weddings and corporate functions.

2010 – 2019 the corporate and wedding events co-existed in unity. Corporate events occupied the space Tuesday – Thursday with an average of 130 days a year training and corporate events. The wedding events occupied the weekends and from 2010 to 2019 we experienced an average year on year percentage increase in bookings of 26%, resulting in 57 weddings bookings for 2019.

2020 our business, as well as many other businesses in the area, suffered greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic. There were restrictions on both the weddings and the corporate events. Between 2020 and July 2021 – we had no operational business only bookings on calendars for both corporate and wedding functions. We kept the business afloat by furloughing many staff and keeping in touch with corporate customers and wedding couples hoping that once the restrictions lifted then we could start up again. In July 2021 the restrictions were lifted. Two things majorly impacted our business strategy following the pandemic:

1. During the pandemic the corporate world moved on, finding that online training, remote working and Zoom/Teams could plug the gap for corporate functions and training.
2. During the pandemic we had been able to market weddings through social media, website virtual tours and Zoom/Teams meetings with couples. This meant that we were able to take future bookings - couples were keen to be married and have their reception at The Out Barn when we were able to open up.



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In order to keep our staff employed and our business viable we had to rebalance the services we offered. With the growth of interest in couples wanting to get married at The Out Barn helped by the RV Wedding Heaven initiative it was a seamless transition to redinvest from corporate to wedding and events functions – there were many transferrable skills that could be drawn on in our existing staff.

2022 was a hard logistical year, not only did we need to run the booked weddings for 2022 but we had to also honour “catch up” weddings of couples who had been postponed during the pandemic - some had been postponed up to 3 times and through our good customer relations we had suffered very few cancellations. 2022 was the year in which everyone wanted their wedding to be held – they had all waited too long.

In 2022, The Out Barn hosted 120 + weddings without a problem. Extra staff were recruited and trained to ensure we delivered a high standard of service. We generated a high customer satisfaction, many additional weddings came from referrals and our achievement was recognised as winners of the Best wedding venue for Lancashire Tourism Awards 2022.

We learnt a lot from that first year after the pandemic:

1. We were able to employ and train many new local staff – a lot of the young staff were embarking on their first jobs and careers (the corporate training had employed professional tutors from outside the area).
2. We identified and worked with key local suppliers to make the best of local talent in business and offer a seamless wedding package.
3. The development into the wedding sector gave us an opportunity for people to experience our beautiful farm, its environment and our sustainable practices. Weddings worked perfectly with our natural environment and Pendle Hill is unmistakable in couples wedding photos.
4. 2022 was a unique year, 120+ weddings was too many and we learnt that our optimum number of weddings was 90.

Four years on our booking rate is stabilising at an average of 90 weddings per year. The training and corporate bookings have not returned to the same level - they continue to be supported by online events as a whole in the industry.

We are a family owned and family run business that has over 30 years’ experience in running functions and managing staff. We offer an exclusive, unforgettable experience in a beautiful setting for the couple’s special day.

As a part of our continuous improvement, we are deeply committed to a number of supporting strategies of our main business:

1. Employing and maintaining a steady workforce who are local and giving them the best experience of sometimes their first job. We currently employ 32 staff.
2. Training, we have years of experience in training and developing staff. We take pride in nurturing talent and encouraging youth development. We are keen, and have supported team members, through workplace apprenticeships.
3. Working with local suppliers and artisans to promote Ribble Valley and all it has to offer.
4. We manage our traffic by ensuring deliveries come weekly wherever possible and delivery of orders that come once a week during the peak season not daily. Many wedding guests share cars and come in minibus transport. Historical data shows minimal traffic incidents on our access road, with only two reported incidents in the last 8 years.
5. Community engagement – to give something back to the people and community that support us so readily – flowers that are left from weddings are taken to local care homes on a rota basis for the residents to enjoy flower arranging with, Christmas hampers are given to our local neighbours as a thank you, we get involved in local initiatives and sponsor local events.
6. We are committed to reducing waste – we keep hens that eat some of the leftover food. We use a recognised recycling company to collect our waste weekly.
7. We have been heavily committed to sustainability since 1986 and have won many tourism awards in the past including being “the Most Beautiful Farm” 2009/10 and “Lancashire Sustainable Tourism Awards” 2009. Our heating and electricity, plus water are generated from green energy. Our site is all but sustainable and off grid.
8. Conservation, a key word, since 1986 we have planted 200-300,00 trees to restore woodlands, lower our carbon footprint and provide fuel for our biomass boiler. We have planted 10.5 kms of hedgerow creating wildlife corridors and privacy for our venue. Trees and shrubs also absorb carbon and any noise that is generated. Each year we plant over an acre of wildflowers outside the venue. These flowers not only serve as a beautiful backdrop for couple's photos but also for natural habitats and bee pollination.
9. We are carbon negative through all our green technology and these efforts make us unique.
10. We fully support Ribble Valley Tourism- we attend tourism meetings; we have hosted Wedding Heaven Meetings and regularly enter tourism awards.



We take our family business and the running of that business seriously, responsibly and intend it to be a legacy for future generations.

Our future objectives are:

1. To continue to offer and run weddings due to their high demand and with this to introduce our proposed lodge accommodation.
2. To offer corporate events as we always have in line with demand.
3. To continue to employ local people. The proposed lodges will create a need to employ more local people to service and administer this service. This will be in the equivalent of 6 full time staff.
4. To continue to network and support local businesses through offering their services within our wedding packages.
5. To continue to minimise our environmental impact with our ongoing efforts in sustainability and green technology
6. To continue to manage effectively our traffic. The introduction of the lodges will further streamline traffic and reduce travel frequency.
7. To continue to support Ribble Valley's tourism strategy such as featured on Ribble Valley's very own wedding dedicated TV series, Wedding Valley. Promoting Lancashire and the Ribble Valley. Cameras captured the build-up to some of the 1,500 weddings that took place in the area over five months from mid 2022.

Ribble Valley council recognises the economic importance and future potential of wedding tourism, which provides substantial value beyond the direct income generated by wedding venues.

The Out Barn has now realigned. We used to run 130+ training and corporate events per year and less than 40 weddings per year. We are now running around 10 corporate/training events per year and 90 weddings per year.

There has been a net reduction in activity from 170 combined events/days to 100 combined events/days per year.

We are seeking a change in our planning conditions to formalise our business as it is now and will be in the future. We hope you will look at this application favourably.

