

Declaration of intent to build new experi-hotel may bring more than 250 new jobs to Västervik

The holiday and experi-resort company Holiday Club has signed a declaration of intent with Gertrudsviks Fastighets AB in Västervik and Västervik Local Authority. The declaration includes the establishment of a major holiday and recreational resort in the northern part of Västervik. The Holiday Club resort in itself is estimated to create 170 new jobs and in combination with the side effects, the new project may result in more than 250 new jobs.

Holiday Club Sweden AB and Gertrudsviks Fastighets AB have together with Västervik Local Authority agreed on a declaration of intent. The declaration states that the three parties have decided to start a joint project to establish in Gertrudsvik in Västervik a large resort with a congress and multi-purpose hall, conference facilities, sports bar with bowling and restaurants. The resort will also include an experi-hotel with 250 hotel rooms, 250 timeshare apartments and an 18-hole championships golf course in the area. Holiday Club expects the Västervik project to be its second investment in Sweden and ready to open as early as in 2009. The agreement shall be finalized before 31 October 2006.

- *The combination of several strong advantages has led to the decision of establishment and the declaration of intent, says Mats Svensson, Managing Director Holiday Club Sweden.*
- *First of all, the brand Västervik is an attractive one with a positive ring. The resort also has the essential ingredients needed to create an all year tourist destination with great potential to develop even more experiences, 365 days per year.*
- *Most importantly, the local authority has taken the strategic decision to support the tourism industry as an important and decisive factor for the future, Svensson continues.*
- *Finally, the fantastic location was a decisive point. The site in Gertrudsviks Sjöstad has everything one could wish, with its sandy beach, the sea, the lake and the closeness to town, Mats Svensson concluded.*

Holiday Club is today present at 14 resorts in Europe, but only one in Sweden – in Åre. Holiday Club Åre opened in 2004 with approximately the same capacity as the one now being planned in Västervik. The investment decision brought many positive effects to Åre Municipality, to the local business community and to the local labour market. Not least through the 200 immediate new jobs at Holiday Club Åre but also for the development of Åre as an all year destination with a very strong growth of the summer tourism.

Åre's Mayor Elsa Danielsson took an active part in the process of Holiday Club's establishment in Åre. Since then NATO has staged a summit meeting in Åre and next year the town will host FIS Alpine World Ski Championships. It is doubtful whether any of these events could have been organised in Åre without the Holiday Club investment.

- *Holiday Club has meant a vitamin injection to all of Åre, says Elsa Danielsson and continues:*
- *It is a definite reason for travel and we have seen that the general increase in the number of visitors also raises the occupancy at the other local hotels and resorts.*
- *All kinds of companies see that they do more business as a result of Holiday Club's establishment and within the restaurant and trade sector we have seen the turnover surging,*

some with as much as 100 to 200 percent during the snow-free period. We have obviously seen positive effects for the entire local population, an influx of new inhabitants and about 200 new job opportunities.

-The experi-hotel and its adjacent beach on Åre Strand have become the natural meeting points for everyone in Åre and the surrounding area, Danielsson concludes.

Over the last few years, Västervik Local Authority has been working closely with several local property owners in order to jointly create new jobs on a long-term basis. From Västervik Local Authority's aspect, an investment of this kind lies fully in line with the long-term strategy that pinpoints the development of the tourism industry as one of the prioritized areas. The local authority aims to develop the plan for the whole area, to invest in the infrastructure in and around the area and actively participate in the entire Holiday Club establishment process in a number of ways – the exact details of these efforts is one of several remaining topics of negotiation, together with the establishment agreement.

- I consider it imperative that we really understand what opportunities that the establishment of Holiday Club will mean to our municipality, says Västervik's Mayor Harald Hjalmarsson and continues:

- Most people know Västervik as a summer resort and now we can complement summer tourism with an all year round tourism sector: for conferences, large events and in addition, presenting extraordinary recreational opportunities for our own inhabitants.

Analyses carried out by the independent research company Resurs AB and Västervik Local Authority show that the Holiday Club establishment will bring 170 immediate new jobs and that another up to 100 new jobs will be created as a result. To Västervik Local Authority this means a new influx of inhabitants, less depopulation and reduced costs for unemployment support measures as the most important effects. The resort will naturally offer new recreational opportunities for the inhabitants of Västervik Municipality. The establishment offers completely new possibilities for all year tourism and other visitors throughout the year, not least demonstrated by Holiday Club's establishment in Åre. A major challenge for the various players within the Västervik tourism sector will now be to develop more attractions for all year availability.

One condition for Holiday Club's establishment in the Gertrudsvik area is the possibility to offer the visitors to the resort, in close proximity to the hotel, an 18-hole golf course of high international standard. A first preliminary study has been concluded, showing that the area around the small lake Maren fulfils the requirements for such a project.

The development of tourist activities and businesses has played a central part in the plans of Gertrudsviks Fastighets AB ever since the property owner Lars Nilsson acquired the old hospital area in 2004. It was also Lars Nilsson who first contacted Holiday Club to check whether the company could be interested in an establishment in Västervik. Gertrudsvik's owner Lars Nilsson sees great opportunities in connection with Holiday Club's investment in a destination that attracts visitors all year round:

- If there is no market we will have to create one, says Lars Nilsson, owner of Gertrudsviks Fastighets AB.

Facts about the planned resort:

- 250 hotel rooms

- 250 timeshare apartments
- Adventure pools adjacent to the hotel,
- Sports bar with bowling, multi-purpose hall, conference facilities and restaurants adjacent to the hotel.
- 18-hole golf course

Welcome to download press photos from the press conference (free for use, just credit "Photo: Johnny Franzén"): and additional background material from:

<http://www.vastervik.se/pressrum> (information in Swedish mostly)

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