

Thursford

Investing in Entrepreneurial Spirit

A commitment to the continuous improvement and enhancement of the current Christmas spectacular, along with transforming the site into a year-round destination—all guided by innovative and forward-thinking leadership.

Thursford exemplifies entrepreneurial excellence, consistently upheld over three generations through innovative vision and steadfast dedication. Since 1977, John Cushing has managed the attraction, showing remarkable resilience and a focus on growth.

He transformed his father's hobby into a thriving venture, with the Christmas Spectacular helping to bring over 100,000 visitors per annum. This forward-thinking approach brought unrivaled entertainment to rural Norfolk, highlighting the bravery needed to turn creative concepts into successful enterprises. Today, their renowned Christmas show features a cast of 150 and a 32-piece orchestra, drawing visitors from across the UK.

The entrepreneurial approach of Thursford demonstrates a combination of innovation and a willingness to move with the times, whilst not losing focus on the small details and the charitable aims of the steam collection. John identified early that delivering exceptional performance is essential when competing with prominent attractions like Disneyland Paris. A recent £3 million investment in an adventure play area—including the UK's first themed water feature—demonstrates a continued commitment to strategic risk-taking. The venue welcomed over 550 visitors on opening day and, within weeks, achieved high visitor attendance coupled with strong secondary spending figures. This investment supports Thursford's objective of establishing itself as a year-round family destination, expanding its appeal beyond the celebrated Christmas show. With his sons Charlie and George now assuming leadership, the institution's entrepreneurial ethos is maintained through generational succession. John maintains the perspective that the aptitude for business leadership is innate, rather than acquired.

THURSFORD
TRULY UNIQUE



Entrepreneurial commitment means dedicating yourself to the business around the clock. For example, John starts planning the Christmas show as early as mid-January and finishes by April, followed by auditions in June that draw over 1,500 people to compete for just 150 roles. This level of dedication - coupled with strong passion and leadership - has turned Thursford into an internationally known attraction. Visitors travel from places like Edinburgh, Cornwall, and Wales, often passing many other options to reach rural Norfolk. The economic impact is significant as well. With 72% of visitors coming from outside East Anglia, more people are discovering what North Norfolk has to offer.

“You’ve got to be passionate, enthusiastic about what you do. Unless you enjoy what you do and you’re passionate about what you do, you don’t succeed.”

John Cushing,
Thursford

Thursford, North Norfolk



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