

END OF YEAR REPORT, FEBRUARY 2018

1. Chairman's Perspective

Before I begin on our various initiatives, I would like to thank every member of the executive for their dedication and commitment to both the Chamber and the community of Brixham. Their contributions have been vital to the success of the Chamber this year and they have freely given of their time and expertise with no thought of personal reward. They have been a pleasure to work with and I am very proud to be associated with them.

I would also like to thank Pauline Neale, who, while not a member of the executive, has also been busy on both the Chamber's, and the Community's, behalf. She undertook the administration of the Business Show and is currently working on the Tidal Bell project. Well done Pauline. Thank you also to Mike Franchi for his work on our websites and helping to keep us all up to date throughout the year.

Tourism Exhibition

Apart from our usual administration, the year started with members of the Executive Committee manning a Chamber Stand at the tourism exhibition on the 15th March, 2017, an activity that we have already booked to repeat at this year's event. Our goal was, and remains, to increase footfall in Brixham by promoting it to as wide a market as possible. The stand was very busy with lots of compliments for Brixham, the Chamber, our new guide to Brixham and the markets. Generally it was a good exhibition overall but the new guide, which we have created, funded and widely distributed, attracted a lot of favourable attention. Over the season it proved to be a great hit with tourists and we distributed 30,000 copies in accordance with our goal of attracting visitors to Brixham. Our thanks to Liz Pippett for her hard work and contributions in this, and other, areas.

Early Season Preparations

With the town preparing for the season, we lent our support to various projects, including financially contributing to the hanging of flower baskets in Middle Street, undertaken by Pride in Brixham. We enjoyed supporting this, especially as it helped to make the area look so bright and cheerful. We also awarded the prizes for our bunting initiative and were able to give Brixham Town Council more than enough bunting to make the town both colourful and interesting. This was a real community effort, with local residents, many voluntary groups, such as the WI, Pride in Brixham, Friends of Furzeham, Fairtrade and supporters of the lifeboat crew, getting involved. Our thanks in particular to Sandy Richards, from the Brixham Sewing Box, and Mary Constance, WI, whose kind contributions helped to ensure the success of the project. We saved the Town Council £1,000, which they were able to use on other community projects. The bunting, with each string accompanied by a unique piece of artwork, was a great success.

The pictures created by Brixham residents and used to decorate the bunting can still be viewed online at <http://online.fliphtml5.com/fvzy/qppz/#p=1> .

In addition to these preparations, we again funded – and put up around the town – the new event boards and some new maps that we commissioned. As before, the Chamber paid for these in full. This coming year, we have saved money on these boards by designing them ourselves. They should be in place before the AGM.

We also designed and provided a map for the Brixham Pirate Festival guide, sponsoring the publication of their leaflets so that they could be distributed as and where necessary. This cost the chamber £1500. We also supported Brixfest with another £1,000.

During this time, we also lobbied Torbay Council and other bodies on issues ranging from urban regeneration to CCTV and parking, not to mention threats to green spaces and other issues as they arose. We also corresponded with, and gave support to, other Brixham organisations in their preparations for the coming season, along with several new businesses. My thanks in particular to Nigel Makin, who tirelessly corresponded, researched approaches by other town councils and attended meetings to the benefit of the Brixham community.

Our treasurer, Matt Crabtree, while keeping close track of our finances, also looked closely into governmental changes likely to impact upon Brixham businesses and made several presentations to members on these and other issues. Thank you Matt.

Alex Foley kept members informed on a number of issues, not least of which was the Seafood Coast initiative, and corresponded widely with people in his drive to ensure the success of this wonderful project. Behind the scenes he also undertook a number of tasks to help others on both the committee and beyond. Thank you Alex.

The Markets

Getting ready for the market season is always a costly affair, with licences and insurance to be arranged and paid for. However the market is a continuing success and achieves several aims for the chamber and, ultimately, for Brixham. These include providing an income – invaluable for enabling us to support Brixham through various initiatives - and also helping trade in the town through increasing footfall. However they also provide a platform for starter businesses, with several market traders now owning and operating shops within the town.

This year, in addition to the Saturday and Sunday fortnightly markets, we continued to run the Wednesday market, matching this to a coach and flyer initiative designed to increase the number of coaches visiting Brixham. This made a big difference to the town on days when the ferries weren't running, helping to reduce an impact that might have otherwise proved even more negative.

My thanks to Chris Slack and Ian Didlick for their many contributions towards making the markets the success that they are.

Over the season, we lost a lot of market days to bad weather – the most in one year since the markets started – but by concentrating on providing best value for our members we were able to largely reduce the negative impact that this might have otherwise had. We may not have had anywhere near as much money to invest as normal but what we had we used to best advantage.

Business Show

Thanks to Pauline Neale, who voluntarily undertook the running and administration of this show on the Chamber's behalf, it was a great success. It was a wonderful example of what we can achieve in Brixham and demonstrates the variety of businesses that we have in the surrounding area. The showcase from BMW out the front with their cars was a really good addition.

Pauline did a terrific job of showcasing Brixham and the surrounding South Devon businesses and a big thank you to Liz Pippet and Claire Talbot from Devon Chamber for their assistance on the day, which helped to ensure that everything ran smoothly.

Lights and Luminations

In addition to our cash donation, we helped to secure some sponsorship for the council to try and bring down some of their costs. Between their savings of £1,000 on the bunting, £600 on the tree and a cash donation of £250, we were, despite the reduced market income, able to provide some very tangible assistance.

Membership

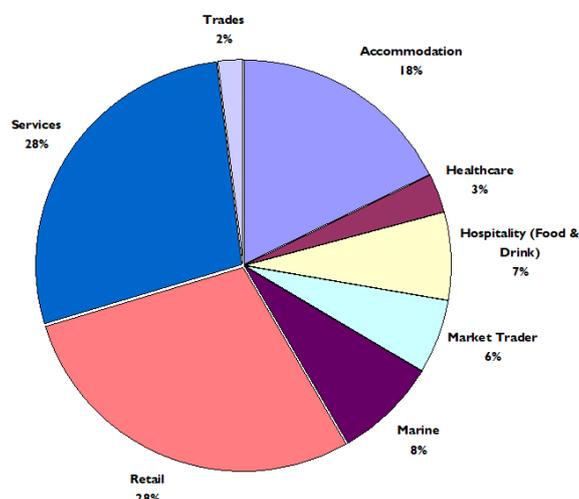
Over the course of the year, Lynne Peats has regularly corresponded with new and existing members, acting as a highly efficient liaison that has helped us to keep abreast of their ideas and concerns. Thank you Lynne.

With the kind help and expertise of Committee member for Hospitality, Alex Foley, we have now set up a system enabling us to send automatic subscription renewal date reminders, along with an invoice, electronically. This more professional approach will furnish our members with efficient billing and help the Chamber to keep the flow of funds coming in on time so that we can plan and distribute our monetary support more efficiently.

We finish the year with 112 members, which is very good considering the changes that we made in relation to the way in which we are now collecting memberships.

The graph following this section shows our membership distribution in terms of trade sectors.

Membership Distribution



And now...

We finish the year in a flurry of considerable correspondence with, and lobbying of, Torbay Council and Harbour authorities regarding parking and the Oxen Cove development. We are also working on several other initiatives that will be of considerable benefit to Brixham. More on these to follow.

Martyn Green

Chairman, Brixham Chamber of Commerce

2. Treasurer's Report

2017 was a challenging year in which the chamber had to keep a careful watch of its finances. However due to some careful budgeting we finished the year in a healthy position.

The income received from membership subscriptions in 2017 amounted to £3,460 compared to £3,990 received in 2016. While the actual amount received in the year has fallen, this is due to timings of receipts rather than a fall in membership which has remained fairly static over the period.

Once again a large amount of our income was generated by the markets. However, mainly due to lost markets because of weather, our income from the markets was significantly down on 2016. In 2017 the total income from markets amounted to £17,960 compared to £25,290 in 2016. After allowing for costs of £10,402.36 in 2017 and £9,932.98 in 2016 the actual amount generated by the markets fell from £1,553.02 in 2016 to £7,557.64 in 2017.

Overall the total income from all sources fell from £30,484.40 in 2016 to £22,589.50 in 2017. This fall in income meant that we had to amend our budgets accordingly. We identified a possible shortfall in income from the markets early in the market season and were therefore able to pull back on some expenditure to safeguard the chamber's funds.

Apart from the market expenses our largest expense category was tourism. Under this heading we funded the event boards that are placed at various places around the bay, paid for a leaflet that was handed out in a coach driver's pack to encourage coaches into Brixham and paid for the distribution of our promotional leaflet across the bay and further afield.

Another smaller but notable expense was the £300 included under Town Centre expenses. The £300 was used to pay for materials used to make the bunting in town. This payment along with a lot of hard work from us and other organisations saved the town council far in excess of the £300 investment.

The chamber also made net donations to local groups totalling £2,650 in the year. This was made up of £1,500 to Brixham Pirate Festival, £450 to the Middle Street Hanging Baskets fund, £1,000 to Brixfest, £250 to the Christmas lights, and £20 to the poppy appeal. We then had a £570 donation returned to us, which we had made in 2016 but was not used, making net donations £2,650.

Overall our total costs in 2017 amounted to £23,574.85 compared to £32,108.69 in 2016. This resulted in a deficit for 2017 of £985.35. This meant that the total funds available to the Chamber as at 31st December 2017 amounted to £9,865.20. This is enough to cover our committed costs in

the early part of 2018, however the chamber will once again have to be careful not to overcommit to further expenditure until we know how much income is likely to be achieved this year.

Matt Crabtree

3. Tourism

Visitor Guide: Print Run 30K

The first main season for our Guide has been a great success. Nationally the guide was distributed by Take One Media and I am happy to report that we reached areas such as Manchester, London, Liverpool, West Midlands and of course the expected take up areas on the M5/ M4 corridor.

The A303 was also popular with Travel Lodge being the biggest national pickup location in the Accommodation sector. Supermarkets capturing the self-catering sector proved very popular along with B&B's in East Devon. Amount distributed was 20k and we had to control this tightly so that the stock lasted till the end of August. We managed it but only just. Take One Media could have easily distributed another 15K

Local distribution was carried out via Westwood Marketing and this concentrated on the main holiday season due to only being able to allocate 10K for this purpose. All guides were gone in 7 weeks, again another 10 -15K would be needed to stretch the season and give full coverage.

Holiday Parks, local attractions were great take up points along with the English Riviera Bid Companies Visitor Information Centre on Vaughan Parade in Torquay. They gave us great support and, as a result, the take up of our guide was immense.

Event Boards

Our newly designed event boards were well received by visitors and residents alike. The clarity of the information worked very well but for 2018 we have taken on board that the gloss print does make it a little difficult in bright sunlight, so we have printed the new boards with a matt finish.

We are always looking for new locations for our boards so if you have access to a high footfall area and would like a board please let us know.

Tourism Event at the English Riviera Centre

The event was very well attended with nothing but praise for our stand and printed material. We will be attending again with the aim to launch our 2018 guide on the 8th March.

Coaching Tourism

Our new coaching leaflet launched in 2017 was very well received by coach drivers and companies. Comments included 'I wish other towns would print a leaflet like this to help us out.' Nice to know we are getting it right.

Social Media

Both the Love Brixham FaceBook and Twitter pages are growing well based on organic posts only.

Posts or images with our friendly local seals, images of our beautiful town or events information get the best pick up with one post receiving over 64k views and our event boards postings being shared over 400 times.

We cannot and must not underestimate the power of these mediums for marketing our town. The guide will, once again, be available as a download on our Love Brixham web site along with our yearly and monthly events guide.

Love Brixham Website

This is the only area to which we have not made much progress. Mike Fanchi, our website developer, has already made up test pages which look great. We just need copy to fill them.

This website could be a massive asset to the marketing of Brixham and we are determined that we can make it work. If you would like to be a part of this project please do get in contact with us.

Conclusion

2017 proved to be a positive and well received year for the first phase of our tourism marketing plan. What is apparent that we need to try to increase our print run of our guide for 2019. This is not possible for 2018 but we will be looking at how we can achieve this in the future.

We will continue to work with our tourism colleagues and support Brixham as a whole by getting the word out there #beautifulbrixham, The Gem of the South Devon Coast.

Elizabeth Pippett

4. Hospitality

Hospitality remains an important part of Brixham's economy with 80 destinations to eat and drink (according to Tripadvisor). The town enjoys a reputation for excellent food and drink and the sector is very important for the local and tourist economy, and employs a lot of local people. However the Chamber of Commerce has relatively few hospitality members and we are actively seeking new members from hospitality businesses.

2017 was the first year of the Torbay-wide Business Improvement District, which invested over £600k during the year on a range of destination-marketing projects. The BID has 4 years left with the intention of boosting tourist numbers to Torbay. Local hospitality businesses contribute to this marketing scheme via a levy on their rateable value. As part of the BID, a marketing initiative "England's Seafood Coast" has been developed and achieved some national funding. Fish market tours, online videos, translated coastal walks and visits for tour operators are among the outputs of this scheme, aimed to attract international visitors to the bay. In 2018 there will be a 2.5-week seafood festival, "England's Seafood Feast", and we have been heavily involved in encouraging local hospitality businesses to get involved in this festival, which will bring lots of foodie tourists to the area.

2017 was another year of cost increases across the hospitality industry, and with noticeable inflation in supplier costs in the last few months, this is likely to continue in 2018. The national living wage, auto-enrolment pensions, higher business rates and BID contributions are contributing to higher costs in what is generally a competitive industry with relatively low profit margins. Labour costs

alone are increasing by around 35% over 5 years. It's not yet clear how our local hospitality businesses will cope with these changes, but this is an industry-wide challenge.

As a Chamber throughout 2017 we have been regularly communicating with the town's hospitality businesses (members and non-members) about upcoming industry-wide and more local changes, challenges and opportunities. We have championed the Seafood Feast and the opportunities this will bring for the town. During 2017 we intend to continue this communication channel and welcome more hospitality businesses into the Chamber membership. Our ambition is for Brixham to be known as the best 'foodie' destination in South Devon.

Plastic waste and disposable packaging is in the news a lot at present, and we have begun to coordinate what we hope will become a Brixham-wide approach to minimising the use and disposal of this type of packaging within our hospitality businesses. We are at a very early stage with this with much more work to do; this will be one of our main hospitality focuses during 2018.

Alex Foley

5. Sunday Market

Total Pitch Fees Taken £1910.00. Although we only lost one market during the year to bad weather the forecast did prove to be a deciding factor for some of the traders in their decision to attend the market. There was one "Charity" trader namely "Pride in Brixham" that had a free pitch albeit taking an area that we could not use for a fee-paying trader.

Ian Didlick

6. Arts & Crafts Market

Arts & Crafts Markets: £11,495.64 banked in the 2017 season; 55 markets but 10 were cancelled this year due to strong winds (the most ever).

Chris Slack