

End of year report March 2021

Chairman's report

Well, what a year that was! We have lived, and still are living, thorough historic times due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have all had to deal with situations and problems that none of us have faced in our life time and I hope will never have to face again. I would not have believed that when we left our AGM last year, that would be the last time we would all be together for more than a year and counting. All of our members have faced problems. Some of these common to all of us and some specific to each business. The Chamber, like its members, also had to find a new way of functioning. All of our plans for the year effectively got written off in March last year when the first lockdown started and we had to reprioritise our goals very quickly.

My report this year will obviously feature covid, and our response to it, very heavily but firstly, I would once again like to thank each member of the executive for their hard work and support for the year. It is because of their hard work that the Chamber has been able to function at all this year, and achieve as much, as it has. Even though we have a very effective team there is always room for a few more to share the load, even if it is just to have another opinion at meetings. If anyone is thinking about joining then please let us know. You will be very welcome. Come along and I am sure you will find it a worthwhile experience. I would also like to thank Mike Franchi for his work on our websites and helping keep us up to date. This has been even more important this year.

This year has been my second full year as chair and to say it has been a challenging year is an understatement. Now that we are taking stock of the last year, it is pleasing to see that we have still managed to achieve a lot this year despite the problems faced by us and our members. Brixham Chamber is still growing and currently has the most members it has had since I joined as chairman. It is currently the 3rd largest Chamber in Devon behind Plymouth and Exeter. For a town of our size this is a massive achievement. We are a very active Chamber and are always looking at ways in which we can benefit the businesses of Brixham. I believe that we do this well considering our finite resources however as I said before we are always looking to see how we can improve and do things better which is why I love being part of Brixham Chamber and am honoured to be its current Chairman.

Summary of the year

We started this year with a lot of enthusiasm and optimism. We were looking at ways we could once again attract visitors to Brixham and we were also keen to see how we could do business in a more environmentally friendly way. As I have already said these plans changed radically in March 2020 when the effects of Covid-19 really started to take effect. For a start we lost the markets and had no idea whether or not they would be able to run. The income from the markets helps to fund a lot of what we do and without those funds coming in we knew our income would be severely limited. We knew we did not have money to throw at the problem and so once again we had to rely on the hard work of the committee. Once again, they have stepped up and I believe that the Chamber has achieved a lot this year and there are many positives that we can take forward. We were able to run the markets in some form which in turn means that we do still have some funds left as we come out of the Covid-19 restrictions. I believe that we have managed our resources well this year and achieved a lot with the resources that we have. Covid-19 has brought a lot of organisations

together across Brixham and Torbay and I hope that this new emphasis on comminating and collaboration will continue into the future. A year on and I am, once again, optimistic about the future. I am hopeful that we will once again be welcoming visitors to Brixham and early indicators suggest that this could be a very busy and long season.

Covid-19 response

Although I will cover how we dealt with Covid-19 in each section of this report there were some things that we did specifically because of Covid-19 which I wanted to cover. When the first lockdown was introduced, we initially felt a bit helpless. Very few of the ways in which we have tried to support businesses in the past were now relevant and, at first it was difficult to know what was and what was not allowed. Although there were daily announcements regarding restrictions and grants that were available, often the detail behind these announcements did not come out until some time after. We therefore decided that the best way we could help our members in the early stages of the pandemic was to keep you updated on any changes in the rules or grant availability in as simple and practical way that we could. We therefore posted updates through our website, twitter, and Facebook when we had any detail of how and where you could apply for the grants.

We also tried to contact every one of our members individually by way of a phone call or by email to just touch base and see how you were. We also wanted to know if we could help you in anyway. This exercise was largely undertaken by Alex and Lynne and was quite an undertaking. Because of these phone calls we were able to identify several members who did not realise that they qualified for a grant. We were also able to act as a go between, between our members and the council where grants seemed to have been delayed. On several occasions we were able to identify the problem and help to push the grant through.

Before Covid-19 we had started to have quarterly meetings with the TDA and council to share information and ideas. When the first lockdown started these meeting changed to weekly and expanded. At these weekly meetings we were able to give direct feedback to the council and TDA on the specific problems that our members were facing. We were also able to get information regarding the roll out of grants and when they would be available which we could then pass on to our members. These meetings were very useful and developed into more than a simple information exchange. Among lots of other subjects discussed at these meeting we were able to influence the Torbay regeneration plan to ensure that Brixham was featured more predominantly. We were also able to influence the allocation of the discretionary grant so that more small business owners benefited than otherwise would have. We also raised the idea of giving hospitality business's more outside seating space than was previously allowed to enable them to have customers and comply with social distancing. These meetings are something that we want to continue into the future as they provide an invaluable forum in which to discuss various issues, not only with the council and TDA but also with the other organisations included.

We have also had several meetings with Brixham Town Council to discuss the needs of our members and how Brixham Town Council could support them. Once again, these meeting were very useful and we know that Brixham Town Council are keen to make Brixham a nice place to visit so that we can attract people back in future years.

I was also honoured to attend the “Brixham stronger together group” meetings which is made up of various groups in the town including YES, Brixham Food Bank, Brixham does care, Brixham town council, the fisherman’s mission and others. This was a great example of what Brixham does best. These groups came together to make sure they could give a coordinated response to help people who were shielding and alone during lockdown. It also looked at ways it could help people whose mental health was suffering during lockdown. What these groups do for Brixham cannot be put into words and we are lucky to have them.

Tourism and marketing

At the start of the year, we once again printed 30,000 of the Brixham guides aimed at attracting visitors from around the country and the bay. The guides were distributed Locally and nationally before the March Lockdown. As all distribution stopped during lockdown and so we still have 2020 guides out there in the market place and will have until approx. May 2021. These were not year specific and so they can still be used this year. We have not been able to commit to another print run this year to the uncertainty around the funds available.

We also printed 10,000 maps to be distributed locally to business for visitors to use. These were not used because of covid restrictions and so we will be able to use them this year.

We once again funded the event boards and updated the maps that you may see dotted around the town and Torbay at the beginning of the year. It was a great shame that the events that we were advertising could not go-ahead last year and are looking doubtful for this year. We are looking forward to when we can enjoy the great events that happen in Brixham again. As we cannot be sure of which events will run this year, we will replace the events boards with pictures of places to visit in Brixham with the hope of encouraging our visitors to explore a little bit further.

Because of the problems associated with printed media during the covid restrictions we switched to online marketing during lock down with an emphasis on supporting local shops, by the #shoplocal, #orderlocalonline #supportbrixham campaigns, whilst still keeping a presence in the holiday marketing with #comebackand see us soon hashtag. We also tried to promote any cafés or other businesses that were doing takeaway or delivery during lockdown through our social media platforms. During the short period of the summer when the lock down was lifted Brixham was exceptionally busy so we concentrated on attracting day visitors and encouraging people to use our great outdoor spaces.

Pre Xmas Lockdown saw us launch another support Brixham campaign aimed at residents in Brixham urging people to buy Xmas gifts via local shops using either online or click and collect and once the restrictions were eased again we launched a paid marketing campaign encouraging people in a small radius to visit, shop and eat in our beautiful town. The FB campaigns were very successful and we received very positive feedback.

The love Brixham Facebook and twitter pages have continued to be very successful. Twitter currently has around 1,250 followers, Facebook has around 6,800 followers and our relatively new Instagram account has around 1,000 followers.

Many thanks to Liz Pippett for all the work she has undertaken in this area.

Markets

This has obviously been a very difficult year for the markets. When Lockdown hit in March it looked very doubtful that the markets would run at all last year which was the case for the Sunday Market.

For the Sunday Market it was felt that there was no safe way of placing stalls into Fore Street without impacting on the ability of people to social distance in the main street. We were also keen for hospitality businesses to be given as much outside seating as possible and so unfortunately the Sunday Market could not run. We will look at restarting this when we believe it is right to do so.

For a while it looked like the art and craft market would also not be able to run however due to a lot of hard work by Pru we were able to open the Arts and Craft Market. I should also say a thank you to Liz who assisted Pru with the new COVID compliant risk assessment. During discussions on how to open the market we worked alongside the Harbour Authority and businesses on the Harbour deciding on the best use of the space. It was therefore decided to run the market in a smaller area but for more days in order to allow some businesses on the Harbour use of the space for outside seating. I believe the result was successful. The same set up will hopefully be able to continue throughout this year and then we will discuss what happens with the space going forward later in the year.

We feel that the markets achieve several of our aims. Firstly, they act as a draw to Brixham increasing the number of people in the town. They also act as a platform for small start-up businesses to try out their products. We have had several market traders over the years move from the market into their own shops and I believe another one is making that leap this year. Finally, it acts as a revenue stream for us and allows us to fund some of our initiatives that we simply would not have the funds to do otherwise.

I would like to say a big thank you to Pru Preston for all her hard work this year in very difficult circumstances. The fact that there was any market at all last year was largely down to you. Pru will be stepping down as Market Manager this year and so we are looking for a new Market Manager to start as soon as possible.

General Meetings

For obvious reasons we have not been able to run our normal general meetings this year. We have tried to keep you up to date through social media and our news letter but we are looking forward to when we can all meet up again.

We did run a Zoom meeting during the year which was attended by Anthony Mangnall to give you the opportunity to put your comments, questions, and concerns to him. I believe this was a useful and I hope those who attended found it worthwhile.

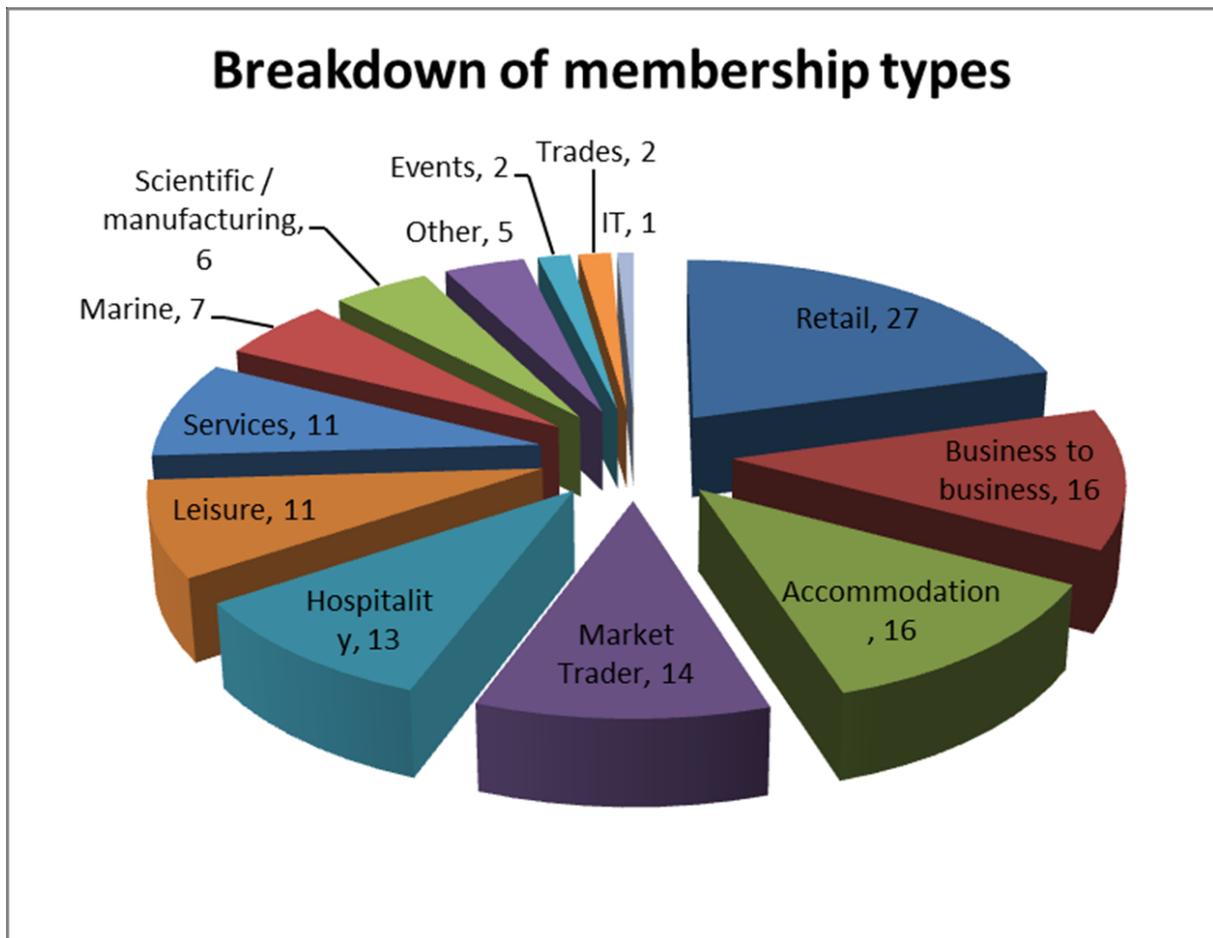
We are hoping that we can restart the general meetings in Autumn this year and look forward to seeing you there.

Membership

As you may remember Chris Bryson took over from Lynne last year as membership secretary. A role he took on in addition to his role as Chamber secretary. Chris stepped down from the chamber executive committee during the year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chris for all the work that he has done for the chamber over the last few years.

I am very pleased to say that Dennis Burke agreed to join the committee as membership secretary and has done a great job since joining us.

At the last count we had 131 members which is fantastic given the size of our town. Our members are split as follows:



Other activities

During the numerous zoom meetings throughout the year, it was agreed that one good thing to come out of Covid-19 was the increased level of communication between the TDA, council and organisations in Torbay. It was agreed that we did not want to lose the connections that had been built up when restrictions are released.

It is obvious that much more is achieved when we work together and we needed to make sure that this did not fizzle out. To stop this happening the chairs of the three chambers of the Bay now also sit on the committee of the business forum. The forum committee meets once a month and it gives us all a chance to put forward concerns that are relevant to our members. More often than not these concerns and problems are replicated across the bay. We can then go to the TDA or council with one voice and will have a bigger chance to influence the discussions made.

As part of the discussions, it was felt that we wanted to give our members opportunities to network even during the lockdown. We have therefore started a new networking group called "Torbay Business and Chambers Network" (TBCN for short). This offers our members a chance to network for free with businesses across the bay. This happens on the 3rd Tuesday of each month and details can be found on our website.

Conclusion.

This last year has been a year like no other and I hope we do not see a year like this again. However, the chamber has still managed to take a very active role in helping our members and communicating with local government.

I have been proud to represent Brixham in too many meetings to remember this year and in many of these Brixham has been help up as an example to follow. One thing Covid has proved is that community spirit is still very much alive in Brixham and I hope the connections that we have made will continue.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our members as it is because of the number of members that we have a voice and are able to achieve what we do.

Treasurer's report

Sitting in the Berry Head Hotel last year for our AGM, few of us could have imagined what a challenging year 2020 was going to be for the world and for Brixham. Despite the challenges we have pulled through and the future arguably looks rosier than it did at this time last year.

Despite the brighter outlook, it has been a difficult year for the Chamber finances. Our markets were severely disrupted, our income took a hit; market income £3,020 compared to £16,675 in 2019, an 82% fall. Despite this significant fall in income, the Harbour Authority kindly waved fees for shorter Summer period when we were able to operate. The Market manager deserves praise for pushing for the opening of the market and re-inventing the way we operate it, all while the pandemic remained a constant obstacle. In the end the market ended on a surplus after costs of £2,001 compared to £8,554 in 2019, still a 73% fall but a great achievement under the circumstances.

The chamber ended 2020 with a deficit of £4167 compared to a £1796 Surplus in 2019. The main reason for the deficit was a collapse in market income as well as large Tourism Promotion expenses early in the year, before it was clear how much disruption the pandemic would cause. These promotions such as maps and leaflets will be utilised during 2021 and as a result, we will not have another round of those expenses early in 2021.

Our membership team has once again done a fantastic job during 2020. The decision was made early in the pandemic to extend due dates on memberships by six months and in a few instances waive membership fees altogether. This has resulted in a lower amount of Membership Fees being collected during 2020, £3,045 compared to £4,060 in 2019. Despite this the team has been busy so far in 2021 and we expect our membership numbers to remain strong and for membership income to recover.

The chamber ended the year with total funds of £11,926 compared to £16,093 at the end of 2019. As mentioned in previous years, with the way our regular expenses fall in the Spring, the end of December is where our funds are at their peak. There were efforts over the previous few years to increase our funds as a buffer for a situation where our income was pummelled. In hindsight, this was the correct policy and has meant that we enter 2021 with enough dry powder to continue operating in a similar fashion to as we have been in previous years.

Going forward, priorities in 2021 will be to repair the Chamber's finances and ensure we are able to continue promoting our wonderful town for years to come.

Aaron Dowling, Treasurer

Brixham Chamber of Commerce
Income and Expenditure Statement for the year to 31/12/2020

	2020		2019	
	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	£	£
Income				
Members Subscriptions	3,045.00		4,060.00	
Markets	3,020.00		16,675.47	
Social Events	<u>0.00</u>		<u>210.00</u>	
Total Income		6,065.00		20,945.47
Expenditure				
Market Expenses	666.29		7,780.37	
Tourism Promotion	5,734.87		5,869.20	
Website	2,495.68		2,687.56	
Donations	350.00		2,030.00	
Insurance	353.06		341.01	
Meetings	20.00		180.00	
Paypal Fees	66.90		82.70	
Social Events	0.00		81.66	
Gifts	75.00		44.00	
Chamber Promotion	448.75		35.00	
Postage & Stationery	21.24		17.79	
Other Expense	<u>0.00</u>		<u>0.00</u>	
Total Expenditure		10,231.79		19,149.29
Total Surplus/(Deficit)		<u>(4,166.79)</u>		<u>1,796.18</u>

Brixham Chamber of Commerce
Movement of Funds for The Year Ended 31/12/20

Opening Balances

Lloyds Bank Account	11,106.81	
Barclays Bank Account	3,387.98	
Paypal	1,597.78	
Petty Cash	-	
Total Funds At 01/01/2020	<hr/>	16,092.57

Less:

Deficit	<hr/> (4,166.79)	(4,166.79)
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Total Funds At 31/12/2020	<hr/> <hr/> 11,925.78
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Closing Balances

Lloyds Bank Account	5,640.72	
Barclays Bank Account	3,562.98	
Paypal	2,722.08	
Petty Cash	-	
Total Funds At 31/12/2020	<hr/> <hr/> 11,925.78	

Current committee

There were no two people going for the same role this year and so there were no elections.

The serving committee are therefore:

Matthew Crabtree	(Chairman)
Alex Foley	(Vice Chair)
Aaron Dowling	(Treasurer)
Pru Preston	(Secretary)
Denis Burke	(Membership Secretary)
Lynne Peets	
Liz Pippett	
Sally Pavely	
Sue Laurie	
Chris Slack	