

REPORT TO TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT REPORT

Report Reference T-24-12
Meeting Date 20th January 2025
Agenda Item 6
Prepared by Town Centre Manager



1.0 INITIATIVES AND FOOTFALL EVENTS

1.2 KNUTSFORD AT HOME

The third Knutsford at Home was held on September 21st. Those who took part were Arthur Lee, RI Home, Sofas, and Stuff, NaturalMat, Oil Art Advisory, Susie Watson Designs, Kendal Quality Carpets, Terzetto, Detaljer, Holly Johnson Antiques, Oka, Detaljer and Havwoods. The day was a mixture of talks (one with RHS's Sam Youd at Lost and Found), ask the architect sessions and workshops. The event was promoted in Cheshire Life as well as our own marketing channels.

Feedback for this event is quite different to Flash Fashion Knutsford and is seen by those participating as a marketing/PR event. However, both Ask the Architects sessions were sold out, Havwood's workshop was sold out and a success, and there was increased footfall and awareness for Oil Art Advisory (a newcomer). Arthur Lee's promotion was a success with the special offers (throws) sold out. Suzy Watson Designs hosted an architect and although footfall wasn't increased, they managed to data capture and talk to those who were visiting.

Sam Youd's talk hosted 20 people and much of the day was filmed by MCCM as part of the ongoing shared prosperity funded project.

Recommendations for 2025 included better and more inspiring leaflet design, work with interior influencers and use the Discover Knutsford website for events (the website was not live when the event was held)

1.2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS WEEK

This is scheduled for 18th January and lasts until 25th January. It has grown considerably since last year with the following taking part – Sian Winslade Consulting, Clare and Illingworth, Satya Sanctuary, Run Knutsford, RunTalkWalk Knutsford, Roberta Beauty Redefined, NC Health and Wellness, Stable Minds, Helen Jones Nutrition, Susanna Walton Nutrition, Just Drop In, Elite Health, Carmichael Clinic, Soul Refomer, Men's Shed Knutsford, Parkletics, Find your Backbone, Knutsford Hearing Centre, and Nxtep Gym. The event is sponsored by Tomorrow's Wellness.

The event now includes Refresh with some of the above businesses also taking part on 18th January alongside 35 community groups. Discover Knutsford and Knutsford Town Council will also have a stand.

1.3 FESTIVE GIFT GUIDE

This 16-page booklet was a new initiative to promote Christmas shopping in Knutsford with an emphasis on independent shopping. The guide contained gifts suitable for all the family, and home, wellness gifts, a directory of shops and a small amount of editorial. The leaflet was distributed to all households in Knutsford and selected addresses in Alderley Edge. Production and design costs were supplemented by advertising revenue from L'Atelier, Owen House Wedding Barn, Cottons Hotel, Detaljer, Knutsford Hearing Centre, Holly Johnson Antiques, April's Kitchen, Oil Art Advisory and Wallop.

The guide was also promoted via Discover Knutsford social media and uploaded on to the Visit Chester and Cheshire website. It was distributed via town centre shops, Tatton Park and at the Discover Knutsford stand at the Christmas markets. The TCM is still evaluating feedback to adapt and improve the leaflet for 2025. Many were not interested in picking up the leaflet at the market and it maybe that a competition of some sort within the leaflet would encourage take up. The leaflet will also be merged with the 'Christmas in Knutsford' leaflet organised by the Events Manager.

2.0 ONGOING INITIATIVES / UPDATES

2.1 BUSINESS RECOGNITION CERTIFICATES

This scheme has continued and received positive response from business and general public. The TCM will be scheduling appointments with Knutsford Town Mayor for 2025. An evening presentation will also take place to include the hospitality who are not open during the day. Those trading from Parkgate and Longridge estates have expressed a desire to be included. The TCM will research those areas and has suggested the Mayor makes a solo visit to present the certificates.

2.2 KNUTSFORD VOUCHER

Voucher sales have been steady and £20 vouchers, since their launch in July, have proved popular. 47 businesses accept the voucher which now can be purchased via Discover Knutsford.

£3,070 worth of vouchers have been sold since April 2024 (£550 - £5, £1380 - £10 and £1,140 - £20)

2.3 TATTON PARK

Tatton Park cancelled the November meeting due to staff illness and have yet to decide regarding taking part in Taste Knutsford. They have refused permission to erect a town centre map within the grounds, a decision the TCM is challenging. The TCM is to schedule quarterly meetings with Tatton Park by the end of January.

3.0 TOWN CENTRE SNAPSHOT AND VACANCIES

3.1 OPENINGS AND CLOSURES

The following businesses have opened

- Six Knutsford
- Li.Ly Restaurant
- Benny and Co

- North West Cancer Research
- Evolve
- Satya Sanctuary

Hot Cocoa has temporarily closed whilst they prepare to move into premises at the Tatton Park end of King Street.

The following businesses have closed:

- Rusty Shamrock
- The Botanist

Knutsford Art Shop and Stationery House is due to close by the end of February. The Hidden Barn have new owners.

The current vacancy rate is 6.5%

4.0 KNUTSFORD MARKET HALL

The market hall is now closed, and the refurbishment works have begun. The Market Hall Butcher and Heathfields will be trading outside on Silk Mill Street car park. The Market Hall Barber are temporarily trading from one of Knutsford's Scout Huts.

The TCM is keeping in touch with all traders throughout the closure period and will continue to promote the market hall. A launch promotion is currently being planned. Once rents have been agreed the TCM will contact all interested parties to fill the permanent stalls, pop-up stalls and promote the middle section to community groups.

5.0 BANKING HUB

The new qualification rules for the banking hub were made public on September 19th. The TCM submitted a new application on 19th November and is waiting for a decision. This usually takes around 10-12 weeks

6.0 BENCHMARKING

December survey and footfall counts took place on 4th December. A second day had to be cancelled due to resourcing issues. The next scheduled counts for this financial year are as follows:

- 12th and 15th March (footfall)

7.0 SHARED PROSPERITY FUND PROJECTS

7.1 STATIC VISITOR MAP

The above maps are scheduled to be installed in the approved locations week commencing 20th

January. Network Rail have given permission to install on one the map near The White Orchid.

7.1 DISCOVER KNUTSFORD

Regular social media posts have been scheduled. A collaboration with Booths was scheduled in the autumn and another collaboration is planned with Tatton Park. The Communications Officer organised a well-received '12 days of Christmas' with the local retailers post. The latest figures are below:

Instagram	Followers	Reach
September	730	30,000
January	1,484	106,644

Facebook	Followers	Reach
September	730	10,000
January	862	15,400

The TCM and Communications Officer are planning to launch a Discover Knutsford TikTok in spring 2025.

The videography project with MCCM comes to an end in March 31st although they have said they will return to film the Bunny Hop on April 19th. This project will mean we will have content for You Tube 'A year in Knutsford' as well as shorter clips (many of which have already been used). The contract with Scene in Knutsford ends on 31st March, the new Marketing Assistant who will provide content support should be in post by mid-April.

7.2 DISCOVER KNUTSFORD WEBSITE

The website launched in October and is the most comprehensive guide to Knutsford. The TCM needs to ensure more blogs are added and the events page contains the most comprehensive listings.

Website visits are as follows:

Visit	Figures
October	2,005
November	5,048
December	4,208
January (to 09/01)	1,770

7.3 VISIT CHESTER AND CHESHIRE WEBSITE

The platinum partnership with the above is now in place. The TCM has found this beneficial not only in terms of the website but also social media with VCC sharing many of Discover Knutsford's posts. The Festive Gift Guide was also uploaded on to the VCC site. This will be renewed for 2025/26.

7.4 TOURISM STRATEGY

The TCM and Communication Officer are to schedule a meeting with stakeholders and the working group in early March.

7.5 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Following the approval of the council budget, the TCM is now progressing arrangements for the next stage of a Business Improvement District. This will include contacting potential consultants to deliver the stage to ascertain if a re-tendering (now budget has been agreed) would be beneficial. It is intended to bring a report on the next stage to the March committee meeting for approval to proceed and this will include a presentation on BIDs to the committee.

8.0 TASTE KNUTSFORD

Recent/upcoming Taste Knutsford tours are as follows:

- 12th October Public tour for 13
- 28th January Private tour for 8
- 4th February Private Tour for 7
- 8th February Public tour for 7

Cheshire Life/Lost in Cheshire will be attending the 8th February tour for a future feature in the publications both on line and in print. There has been an increase in requests for private tours. Enquiries coming from Discover Knutsford and Visit Chester and Cheshire before visiting Taste Knutsford's website.

The TCM is to schedule meetings with Six Knutsford and Li.Ly Restaurant regarding joining the tour.