

REPORT TO TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT REPORT

Report Reference T-25-26
Meeting Date 13th April 2026
Agenda Item 6
Prepared by Town Centre Manager



1.0 TOWN CENTRE FOOTFALL EVENTS

1.2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS WEEK

Health and Wellness week took place from 14th – 22nd March. The following business took part - Satya Sanctuary, Find your Backbone, Roberta Beauty Redefined, Carmichael Clinic, King Street Dental Practice, Clare and Illingworth, Knutsford Hearing Centre, Stable Minds, Elite Health, Sian Winslade Coaching, Tor Nutrition and Guided Outdoor Adventures, Mum Club Cheshire East, Soul Reformer, Casbah Fitness, Judi Quirke Hypnotherapy, Tomorrow Cardiovascular Wellness, Nxtep Gym, and K Clinic.

There were collaborations with York & Co, Helen Jones Nutrition and Cheshire East Mum Club. The move from January to March gave more time to Events and TCM to market the event away from the Christmas period and this was positively received by those taking part.

The TCM has requested feedback from businesses and has had the following so far:

- The Centre does not do any events but offers free consultations and incentives to visit. The week's appointments are different, and we meet people who would not normally visit. Widening the appeal of the hearing centre and adding to the database is an objective which is realised.
- The marketing, socials and content was regular and good. Much appreciated. Obviously did our own too to tie in with that.
- All of the drop-in clinics were fairly quiet, but we had two new patients book dry eye assessments and a treatment for one which in total was £1300 between the two and another potential patient off the back of the nutrition drop-in.
- We had a good take up again and new clients to the salon. So I'm happy and like to be part of the event.

Two businesses, despite the increase in marketing had little take-up with one opting not to take part in future events.

The TCM is still collating feedback, but initial recommendations would be to streamline the content and number of participants, all participants to agree to a minimum promotion schedule and link in, if possible, with Knutsford Medical partnership. With the latter although leaflets are distributed to the surgeries, it would be valuable to get more tie-in to raise awareness to their patients.

1.3 KNUTSFORD FASHION WEEK

This event, formerly Flash Fashion, take place from 11-16th May, with the following businesses taking part; Blossom Boutique, Graham and Brown, Clare and Illingworth, Alex&er Jewellery, Bare Necessities, Zapatos, Kanoa Living, Riva Menswear, Oliver Wild, Chalk 33, Satya Sanctuary, Guinot, The Edit, Redress at Dexter and Jones, CAFT, British Red Cross, Milania Boutique, and Lanigan and Hulme.

During the week, some shops are offering personal styling sessions, consultations, and prize draws. Lucy Norris of Live with Lucy will be promoting each shop during the run up to the event with Laura Davies Styling the overall event sponsor. The catwalk show will be held at the end of the week on the Saturday 16th, and it is hoped this tweak to the event will bring footfall to the town throughout the week to all boutiques. Feedback from previous years has been the catwalk show often only appeals to the mid-range not high-end customer.

Marketing is via a leaflet, posters and banners and social media alongside participants own social media and promotional strategies and blogs.

2.0 ONGOING INITIATIVES / UPDATES

2.1 BUSINESS RECOGNITION CERTIFICATES

This scheme recommenced in February and is a popular initiative with all businesses.

2.2 KNUTSFORD VOUCHER

In the 2025/26 financial year to 31st March, £5,950 of vouchers were sold (108 x £5, 123 x £10, 209 x £20). This is almost double the total in the 2024/25 financial year (£2,945; 113 x £5, 112 x £10, 63 x £20).

59 businesses now accept the voucher with Smoke Knutsford a new recruit (Cocaranti have since closed). The TCM is hoping the new reformer studios and gyms will also accept the voucher. The TCM is to arrange publicity for Tabley House who are now re-open as a new recruit from autumn last year.

2.3 TATTON PARK

The next meeting with Tatton Park scheduled for April 23rd. Since January a collaboration in February with Discover Knutsford, Tatton Park, Giovannis and Girl About Cheshire had a reach of just over 14,000 with 271 likes and 34 comments. Another collaboration is to be scheduled.

The TCM is working on producing the map for the park with the Tourism and Marketing Officer working on the packs for the cottages and business promotion for the visitors centre. The Discover Knutsford roadside banner is now up in the Rostherne entrance.

2.4 CHESHIRE SHOW

After a review of the number of mailing list sign ups obtained at the 2025 show and balanced with the level of staff resource required in planning and executing the stand, Discover Knutsford will not exhibit at the show this year.

The TCM will arrange to meet with the show's organisers after the 2026 event to plan a more mutually

beneficial contra-deal for 2027. The TCM will also meet with Knutsford Hosts. The TCM is currently looking at any other contra deals that of relevance including Foodie Festival.

2.5 CHRISTMAS WORKING GROUP

A small Christmas working group has been formed to ensure once the Christmas lights switch on and Christmas market are finished there is still a festive atmosphere in the town and incentives to shop. It met on 7th April and initial thoughts were:

- Extension of the Crib Service to a community carol service (this had already been identified as an action by the Civic Events Officer and is being implemented for 2026)
- An advent window campaign (similar to Saltaire's Living Advent Windows) in shops and town centre homes
- Additional experiences/pop-ups in the town to draw crowds and give people a reason to visit
- Trails – 'Elf doors', business led gingerbread house competitions
- Evening experiences across the festive period
- Choirs singing in, for example, Wallwood and other locations
- Building relationships with Lapland UK and hotels in the locality
- Additional park and rides from Booths Park (it was stressed this would need thorough promotion by shops to their customers)
- Buskers
- Umbrella promotion of Knutsford's varied offer – independent shops stocking well-known brands as well as unique gifts alongside big names such as Oka and Cotswold Company, Barbour
- Highlight Knutsford is a not 'cut and paste' offer but offers an independent Christmas against the backdrop of stunning architecture and Tatton Park.

It is hoped the business improvement district will join the next meeting. Ideas need prioritising, refining and pricing to see if they are viable. Any additional initiatives/incentives will be included in the 'Christmas in Knutsford' brochure.

With the decision to not hold a *Knutsford at Home* event in 2026, it is intended to utilise budget within the Promotional Events cost centre to support some of this activity.

2.6 KNUTSFORD CUP

Designs have been received from Knutsford Academy and the TCM is to arrange a meeting with participating cafes in May.

3.0 TOWN CENTRE SNAPSHOT AND VACANCIES

3.1 OPENINGS AND CLOSURES

The following businesses have opened:

- MK Reformer
- Fitism

Redkau are due to open in the former CarrotBananaPeach premises on Heritage Way and Alex&er Jewellery on Princess Street. Rohan is due to move into their new premises in the spring.

Brief overview of businesses in Knutsford:

Sector	%
Retail	50
Hospitality	20
Health and Beauty	12
Professional Services	9
Vacant	6
Leisure	2
Banks	0.5

Vacancy rate remains 6%.

Smoke have offered to pay to extend the market hall's bin store to incorporate their bins enabling Smoke to use their courtyard for alfresco dining.

The TCM has contacted all hospitality with regards to bin 'best practice' in terms of putting bins away after collection, cleaning bins and ensuring waste is picked up.

Breakdown excluding vacant properties are:

- 60% of businesses are independent
- 2% of businesses are national
- 13% of businesses are regional

4.0 KNUTSFORD MARKET HALL

Heathfields are returning to the market on April 18th until July for the planting season. Thai Kitchen is leaving the market in April and Sweet Knutsford are due to take over the stall.

Hot Cocoa will remain in stall 6 until the end of May and the TCM is contacting interested parties.

Pop-ups during this period at the agreed lower price of £20 include – Plastic Free Knutsford, Julie Creative Vibes, Lila's Threads, Wild Isle Outfitters, Sara's Sewing Loft, Solais Candles and Soaps, Orchidalia, and Sunshine Healing. More boosted posts are required to maintain footfall for pop-ups alongside 'featured days' such as – food and drink; fashion; childrenswear; and French themed.

The TCM has agreed with the organisers of the Makers Market that they promote the market's Sunday pop-ups (taking a fee minus our £20 pop-up fee) under their brand alongside other traders in the Market Hall. This will commence for the May's makers market.

Love your Local Market takes place on 15th to 30th May and the TCM has organised for Egerton School Choir and Mayor for the opening day, Taste of the Market on 23rd May, a 'Tea and Tech' session with Knutsford Mobile (working with Knutsford Together and other community groups), and a K-Pop demon hunter character. An A5 leaflet will be distributed with an incentive to visit the market to

receive a chance to enter a prize draw (when a purchase has been made) and vouchers for 2 first time delivery customers. York & Co are also arranging an event and introducing their own loyalty scheme.

The Market Hall is taking part in the Music Festival with Maisie Farber-Evans singing on the Saturday and a Men's Choir on the Sunday.

Bookings for events are steady –with the Vintage market, wine tastings, daylight disco, private parties, and theatre. The TCM is organising a 'plant talk' with Sam Youd of the RHS.

The Market Hall will be taking part in National Market Traders Federation 'Young Trader's promotions from June onwards offering free pop-ups on the first Friday of the month.

Operationally, air conditioning, ventilation and blinds or screening is required for the market hall as temperatures rise. Trader retention and footfall will be affected if these issues are not resolved. The original contractor for the ventilation/AC work pulled out and the Town Clerk is obtaining new pricing; this should be commissioned within the next week. The Deputy Town Clerk is exploring options for screening to reduce the light intensity from the skylights.

5.0 DISCOVER KNUTSFORD

5.1 DISCOVER KNUTSFORD

The latest figures for the social media accounts are as follows:

Month	Instagram Reach	Facebook Reach
April	8,500	3,700
May	10,600	3,600
June	12,800	7,000
July	9,600	54,000
August	8,000	9,200
September	10,300	27,500
October	11,900	32,700
November	19,500	29,600
December	12,700	10,400
January	11,000	27,900
February	9,700	45,537
March	8,600	44,199
TOTAL	133,200	295,366

Social media has continued with 3 to 4 posts a week across both platforms. Instagram has 3,628 followers and Facebook 2,000. Why there was a dip in December is being looked at, with data requested from Tatton Park and Visit Chester and Cheshire to see if it was specific to Discover Knutsford or a seasonal trend.

5.2 DISCOVER KNUTSFORD WEBSITE

Website visits are as follows (from Google Analytics):

- April -1.4k active users
- May – 2.7k active users
- June – 2.4k active users
- July – 2.3k active users
- August – 3.9k active users
- September –2.4k active users
- October – 2.1k active users
- November – 4.2k active users
- December – 3.1k active users
- January – 2.3k active users
- February – 2.1k active users
- March - 2.3k active users

5.3 VISIT CHESTER AND CHESHIRE WEBSITE

A visit with travel buyers from New Zealand and Australia hosted by Marketing Cheshire took place on 4th February. It is recommended that Discover Knutsford advertises in the 'What's On Guide' within the tourism strategy.

6.0 TASTE KNUTSFORD

Recent and forthcoming tours are as follows:

- 25th March – Haunted Table for 6
- 11th April – tour for 7
- 16th May – tour for 8

Two additional Haunted Table tours have been added.

A half page advertisement was booked in the March issue of Cheshire Life. The TCM has ordered new window stickers and a messenger bag for the guide. The TCM is also targeting influencers to attend a tour gratis in return for a reel.

7.0 BENCHMARKING

Two footfall only counts took place in March.

- 11th March – 7,548 (cloudy overcast)
- 14th March – 15,518 (weather sunny spells/slightly overcast at times)

The TCM is chasing for Cheshire East footfall reports.

It is planned for the June benchmarking surveys to be slightly different and to focus on those parking

in the car parks to track their visit/purpose and those walking through the Knutsford Gate of Tatton Park. Additionally, benchmarking will take place in the June's Makers Market to ascertain if shoppers' visit includes the 'brick shops' and if not, what would encourage them to extend their visit. It is envisaged this data can be used to help promote the wider town shops during the Christmas market.

September, December and March 2027 benchmarking will take place as previous years.

Parking and lack of public transport remains a major source of concern with all businesses. Requests to use other car parks have been declined as there is no capacity (Edmundson Electrical, TT Games, Caledonian House) or it is not permitted (Regent Street residents). The TCM has let businesses know the owner of the car park at the rear of the moor has offered permits to businesses. The town council has offered it's car park from mid-May (6pm Friday to 8am Monday) with strict rules with one hospitality business, so far, taking up the offer.

The TCM has received reports from CEC Parking Services giving an hourly breakdown of parking usage which she will analyse in time for the June meeting.