

REPORT TO TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT REPORT

Report Reference T-26-03
Meeting Date 28th September
Agenda Item 6
Prepared by S Curties, Town Centre Manager



1.0 TOWN CENTRE FOOTFALL EVENTS

1.1 ALFRESCO DINING

This was held on August 16th in conjunction with Paint Knutsford. It was an extremely busy and successful event and the largest alfresco event since they began in 2021.

The following venues took part-

- Rose and Crown
- Wallop
- Six Knutsford
- Smoke Knutsford
- Gusto
- Piccolinos
- Morgan Edwards Fine Wine and Spirits
- Smokehouse & Cellar
- Patrick's Irish Bar
- April's Kitchen
- Stolen Lamb
- Courtyard Coffee shop (with a Jamaican pop-up)

Pizza Express and Mowgli had booked to take part but didn't on the day. The Events Manager is ascertaining as to why.

The Town Centre Manager has gathered some feedback from the participating venues as follows –

- We did four times our usual Sunday trade
- I've never done this before so I couldn't tell you but for my first time doing this we did an amazing take in for my first time.
- Sunday was four times better than a normal Sunday
- Our takings increased by roughly 300% during last Sunday's Al fresco dining event. I found that if people couldn't get a table outside, they would still come inside to eat or have a drink.

She is chasing for more feedback but there has been no negative feedback from those taking part.

The TCM has had some feedback from those who didn't take part –

- Tough to say as our weeks have been all over the place recently so last year isn't really comparable with the weather, customer habits etc, we were a little quiet for food in the day but did get a late surge for drinks later on so kind of balanced out for the day
- Very quiet, we managed to fill the five tables outside, but of course, most of the trading was into the dining al fresco

She has advised those outside the area of the approach the Stolen Lamb took (who are also outside the road closure) and whether they could implement similar for 2027. The TCM envisages Minshull/outside the Lost and Found should be able to take part again in 2027.

1.2 FAMILY FEST

This event incorporating Movies on the Moor and took place on 11-12th July. Content included –

- Family Bootcamp run by Fitism
- Little Beats Knutsford by Satya Sanctuary
- Music time with Popcats
- Phonics with Robot Reg
- Kid's Disco
- Yoga with Satya Sanctuary
- Food offers from Stolen Lamb, Evuna and Piccolinos

Movies on the Moor was extremely popular with families and well received. The outlying events less so with the Kid's Disco cancelled due to poor uptake. Popcats was fully booked but the feedback from other venues wasn't encouraging. It is noted the business most relevant to this event has never taken part.

The TCM and Events Manager have reviewed the viability of the event. It was concluded to discontinue Family Fest and host just Movies on the Moor and alfresco dining.

2.0 ONGOING INITIATIVES / UPDATES

2.1 BUSINESS RECOGNITION CERTIFICATES

This scheme recommenced in July with another round due to take place in the autumn. The TCM had a meeting with Alsager Town Council who wish to introduce a similar scheme.

2.2 KNUTSFORD VOUCHER

Voucher sales have been steady. 59 businesses accept the voucher, and a press release was issued promoting Alex&er Jewellery joining the scheme (they also joined the Feeding Charter and Take A Seat) Voucher sales for the new financial year so far are £2820 (£210 £5 voucher, £750 of £10 voucher and £1860 of £20 voucher)

A large 'Foamex' voucher has been ordered to be used for promotional purposes. This is to raise awareness to both consumers and those businesses who do not take part.

2.3 TATTON PARK/COACH FRIENDLY

The TCM is to meet with Tatton Park in the autumn to further discuss the joint promotion to coach companies visiting the town. This will work side-by-side with any future town centre coach facilities.

2.4 CHRISTMAS WORKING GROUP AND CHRISTMAS BROCHURE

The Christmas brochure is production with the advertisements all sold (the BID decided against funding the 2026 edition).

This year the brochure will increase to 24 pages and the TCM is currently encouraging businesses to submit their photos and/or take products to Dagmara Studios for photographing. This is the most difficult and time-consuming part. She is also arranging more editorial with contributions from local businesses and 'Did you know facts running along the bottom'. There will be a competition with a QR code to win Knutsford vouchers to spend in 2027. The brochure will also highlight the unique experience of shopping in historic Knutsford as opposed to 'clone towns'.

Advertisers are as follows:

- Owen House Barn
- Wallop
- Knutsford Hearing Centre
- Storeys of Cheshire
- Detaljer
- Clarity Contemporary Jewellery
- Alexander Jewellery
- Linden Stores
- The Lambing Shed
- The Cotswold Company
- Dexter & Jones
- Booths
- Evuna
- Find your backbone
- Saks
- Cottons Hotel & Spa

There has been an additional colour and icon added to the Discover Knutsford branding guide to promote Christmas (as well as an additional 'stay' and 'wellness' icons)

The TCM has also written an adult cryptic treasure trail that covers the town centre. Again, this will come will include a prize draw for vouchers to spend in 2027. This will be available in town centre shops as well as via a download on the Discover Knutsford site.

The additional parking options discussed in the working group have been excluded due to the cost of matting for the small heath (quotations were between £40,000 to £100,000) and the additional signage required for visitors to navigate the one-way system leading to Egerton School. The TCM suggested to businesses they could use the school car park during the festive weekends to free up approximately 50 spaces in town for shoppers, but this was declined.

There will be an additional 'People's Choice' for the Christmas window competition (as well as the judged one) with school choirs in the town on December 19th.

Knutsford Heritage Centre are currently looking at hosting a Father Christmas and grotto on weekends outside of the light switch on and Christmas markets.

The TCM is to email local primary schools for a 'Festive Carol Trail' in the town centre on December 19th. A Christmas Bake-Off is due to be held in the market hall, run by Knutsford Bake Club. The TCM is looking at additional signage to sign post visitors to the car park at the rear of the moor and the Town Centre Team are planning a social Christmas campaign.

3.0 TOWN CENTRE SNAPSHOT AND VACANCIES

3.1 OPENINGS AND CLOSURES

Since June's report the following businesses have opened:

- Redkau
- Ova Nail Spa
- Moorside Barber
- Rowlinsons Solicitors

Cullimore Dutton are due to open in the former Hot Cocoa premises.

The following businesses have closed or are about to close

- Sayers
- TJ Hughes

Brief overview of businesses in Knutsford:

Sector	%
Retail	50
Hospitality	20
Health and Beauty	12
Professional Services	9
Vacant	6.5
Leisure	2
Banks	0.5

Vacancy rate has risen by 0.5% to 6.5%.

Breakdown excluding vacant properties are:

- 60% of businesses are independent
- 22% of businesses are national
- 13% of businesses are regional

The TCM manager has asked the appropriate letting agencies/landlords on progress with regards to vacant buildings. This includes the Courthouse and 3 Princess Street, both have been vacant for some time. The former King Street Kitchen should be back on the market to let by Christmas.

4.0 KNUTSFORD MARKET HALL

Cheshire Craft Store have now opened, and permanent trader occupancy is 100%

From October, themed pop-ups will be as follows –

- 1st Saturday – Well & Being (health, wellness, self-care and lifestyle)
- 2nd Saturday – The Living Space (Home, garden, flowers & plants, interiors & home crafts)
- 3rd Saturday – Silk Mill Collection (menswear, womenswear, accessories and jewellery)
- 4th Saturday – Little Explorers (childrenswear, toys and books)
- 5th Saturday – Charity & Community Pop-ups (not for profits, local causes and community groups)*

*this only happens a few times a year.

Pop-up since June have been as follows –

Crafts and Sewing Susan, Handmade by Rebecca, Heathfields, ACarrotsArt, Oh My Dates, Scarlett Rosa Shop, Katie Taylors & Co, JNL Studio Design, Gill Naylor Ceramics, Anthony Crosbie Home wear, as well as 4/5 bookings each Makers Market Sunday.

Bookings for events are steady – with the Vintage market, wine tastings, private parties, political parties, and memorials. A talk with Sam Youd was popular with a repeat one to take place in September. Take up for the Young Traders Market is slow with only 2 signing to trade in July and August. The Market Café is looking to host a Turkish night.

Air conditioning and ventilation works installation is complete. Tinting for the skylights was completed in September too. Additional brighter colours are being added to the branding guide to produce new posters (including a new A board) and will be reflected in marketing campaigns.

The TCM and Tourism and Marketing Officer have met with each trader individually with regards to trader marketing plans.

5.0 PHOTOGRAPHY

Love your Lens has continued to photograph Knutsford – its businesses, streets, people, products and green spaces. The photography library has helped with staff time – allowing the team to post carousel posts more efficiently. As we move into autumn and cosy season – the photographs will reflect that.

6.0 TASTE KNUTSFORD

Recent and forthcoming tours are as follows:

- 8th August – tour for 4
- 5th September – private tour for 14
- 12th September – tour for 9
- 10th October – tour for 12
- 24th October – private tour for 10
- 14th November – tour for 6 (so far)

An influencer has been booked in for October tour. All tour dates for 2027 are on the website with Haunted Table tours to be added later.

The TCM is exploring a ‘wine tour’ and ‘ale trail’ and possibly a heritage and food tour options for 2027.

7.0 BENCHMARKING

The 2026/7 benchmarking programme has commenced as below -

Month	Type
June	Shoppers survey (Music Festival) Shoppers survey (Makers Market) Market Hall shoppers survey (on line and in person)
July	Shoppers survey – King and Tatton Street car parks
September	Shoppers survey – Town Centre Shoppers survey (Heritage Open Days)
December	Shoppers survey (Christmas market) Shoppers survey (non-market day)
March	Shoppers survey (general) Shoppers survey (Bunny Hop)

The TCM is to circulate a market traders business confidence survey in September. The wider business confidence survey will be bi-annually with the next one circulated in June 2027.

The TCM will collate the survey results for January’s committee meeting.