



# CHRISTCHURCH CHAMBER CHAT

Issue 4 - August 2021



## Its Thumbs Up from local businesses for the Christchurch BID

The Christchurch BID launched its business plan in the Priory Gardens on Thursday 12th August, ahead of the opening of the vote.

Ballot papers for the crucial vote that will determine whether the BID will proceed will be sent out to those in the BID area on the 2nd September with voting closing on the 30th September and the result being announced on the 1st October. A 50% vote in favour, judged both on votes cast and also comprising more than 50% of the total rateable value of the votes cast, is needed for a successful outcome.

BID stands for 'Business Improvement District' and is a business-led and business-funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area – in this case Christchurch Town centre. See the plan of the area involved, on the next page.

There are more than 320 successful BIDS in operation across the country, including a number in the Bournemouth area. The idea is that the businesses in the BID area pay a sum in the region of 1.75% on top of their business rates into a fund managed and spent by an elected Board of Directors voted for by the local business owners who contribute to the fund. The monies are therefore ring-fenced for use in the BID area and on projects which the businesses themselves choose are most important.

(continues overleaf)

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# Christchurch BID (continued from front page)

The calculation is that if the BID is successful it will produce around £647,500 over its five-year life-span. Business feedback has already been sought and the Business Plan lists the top projects that local businesses wish to see:

- 1) Car parking discounts and improved spaces
- 2) Improving the appearance of empty shops and better street cleaning
- 3) Marketing & promotion to project the town to a far wider audience
- 4) Projects to encourage investment into Christchurch
- 5) More seasonal and other events
- 6) Schemes to save businesses money on overheads
- 7) Social media campaigning and a visitor website
- 8) Town centre wi-fi
- 9) Improvements to paving and street furniture, planting and landscaping
- 10) Improved business to business communication

Chair of the Christchurch BID Development Board, Lucy Filer, a local accountant with Filer Knapper, explained to the launch meeting the many benefits that a successful BID would bring to the town. In addition to the funds raised by the levy, it would put Christchurch in a good position to apply for local and government grants. She also warned of her concerns that a failure to obtain the BID could put Christchurch at a significant disadvantage in future years, as neighbouring town centres with successful BIDs pressed ahead.

It was noted that representatives from many of the larger businesses in the town were present at the launch and were indicating support, so hopes were high that the hard work of the Steering Group of local business members would be rewarded with a positive outcome.

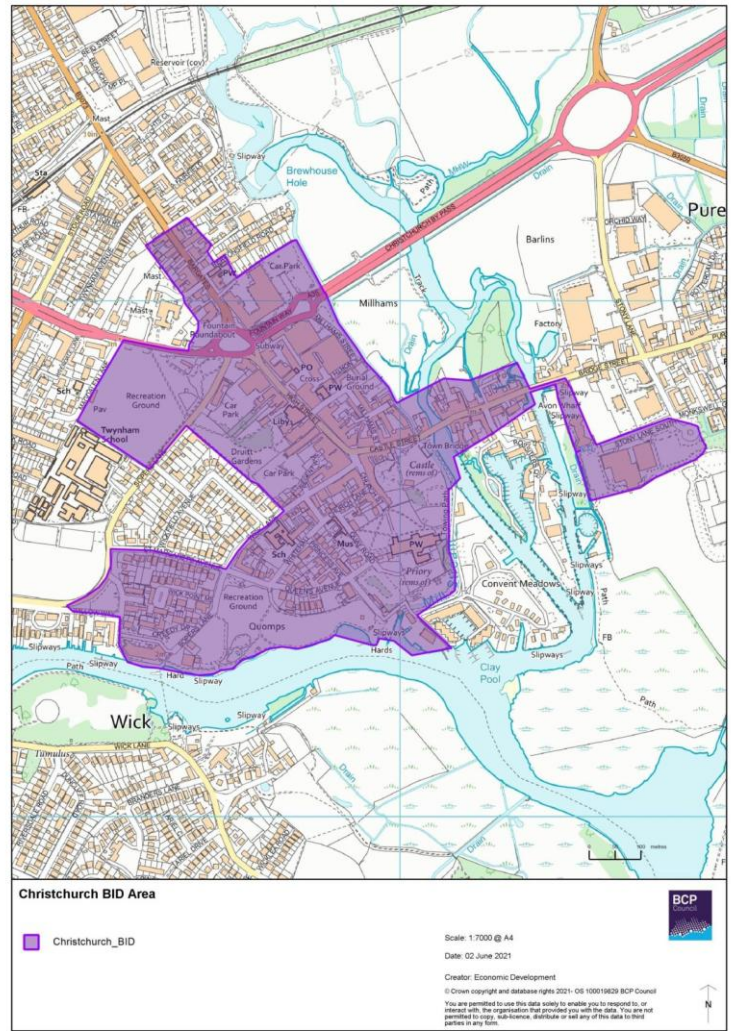
A successful BID would, of course, also be a great outcome for Christchurch residents and visitors who would be able to see the benefits it brings and, it is hoped, be encouraged to spend more time and money in our town centre.



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# The 5 O'clock Club – The Relaunch

The Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce has for many years run the 5 O'Clock Club as a chance for businesses to meet and get together and “network”.

Traditionally, this was held monthly on a Friday at the Captains Club. It was then felt that Friday was quite difficult for a lot of people as this was the start of the weekend so it was moved to a Thursday.

Then COVID struck and all things networking ceased overnight!

During that time members of the Executive Committee received feedback from businesses that “networking” wasn't really their thing and had the perception that it was a formal affair and possibly even meant having to speak or introduce themselves in front of everyone – please be assured this is not the case at all.

Now that hospitality can open up again we feel it is time for a relaunch of the 5 O'Clock Club. The main aim is to meet up with friendly like-minded people who have businesses in town where we can chat about what we do over a glass of something refreshing after work once a month.

We have set the date for 16th September 2021 at 5 p.m. at the Captains Club Hotel. Please do come along. All our existing members are welcome and we can't wait to see you again. If you are not a member yet, but would like to use this to come and see us, then please do. It will be a friendly, pleasant and even fun experience.

There's also the opportunity to sponsor the event and promote your business, if that is what would like to do.

If you would like to have a chat about the format or sponsorship or how better it might be set up, Suzanne Kadziola, our Events Officer, is more than happy to speak to you. We really do want to make this as far-reaching and popular as possible so everyone is welcome. If you have any feedback, ideas or suggestions please let us know.

Suzanne can be contacted on 01202 484242 or [events@christchurchchamber.co.uk](mailto:events@christchurchchamber.co.uk)



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## Tell us your news

This is the fourth edition of Chamber Chat. It is about Christchurch businesses both small and large. If you are a Member of the Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce and have business news you are happy to share, please do tell us.

If you are a new member and want to tell the rest of us about your business, then we look forward to hearing from you.

Remember, Christchurch Chamber covers the whole of the old Borough and we welcome members from Hurn to Highcliffe and all places in between.

This Chamber Chat is being delivered free to businesses across Christchurch, Highcliffe, Somerford, Mundeford, Burton, Barrack Road, Fairmile and up to the airport. It's printing is paid for by it's adverts—with any surplus funds that might arise helping to fund the Chambers future activities

If you would like to advertise in future editions then contact Sue Harmon-Smith on [sueharmonsmith@gmail.com](mailto:sueharmonsmith@gmail.com)  
Not only will you be supporting the Chamber but your advert will reach a targeted local business audience.

If you have a contribution you would like to make to the next edition, then contact me on [pwatson-lee@outlook.com](mailto:pwatson-lee@outlook.com).

Peter Watson-Lee, Editor  
[communications@christchurchchamber.co.uk](mailto:communications@christchurchchamber.co.uk)

# Redevelopment in Reid Street?

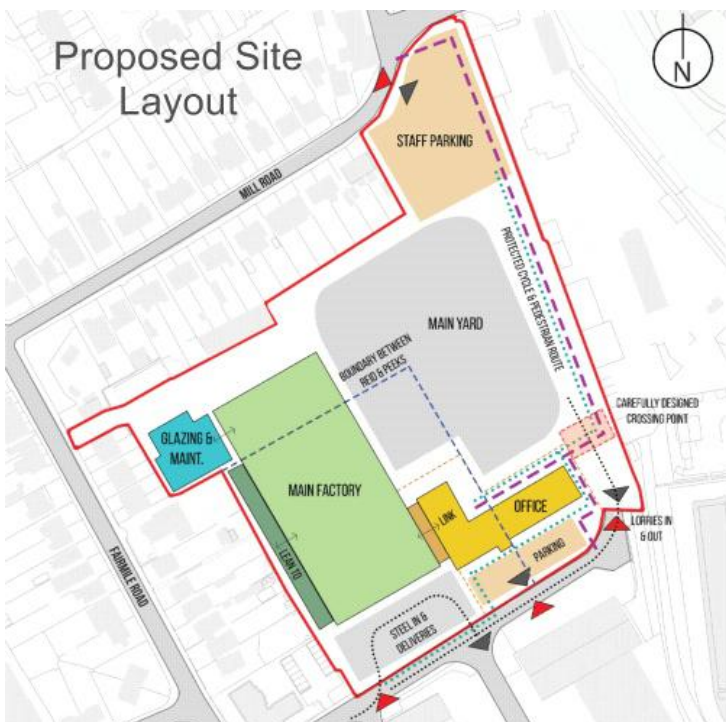
A dramatic change of direction by REIDsteel could result in a multi-million pound investment by one of the town's biggest employers.

This time last year REIDsteel were planning to move out of Christchurch as their site in Reid Street was too small and cramped for their future growth plans. So set were they in their plan to do so, that they had obtained planning permission for 170 residential houses to be built on their site.

However, the sad demise and liquidation of the long-established Peeks Party Stores in May of last year, at the start of the pandemic, has clearly resulted in a re-think. Peek's former store and the Monkey Madness soft play centre are next door to Reid's current factory and the plan is now to take over and redevelop the whole site into a purpose-built manufacturing facility.

REIDsteel is one of the town's great success stories. It employs 130 people and in its 50 year history in Christchurch it has become renowned for its exports to over 140 countries. In May of this year, for example, it transported 32 shipping containers of steel product to Belize for the building of a landmark government building there.

If its new plans get the necessary permissions to proceed, there will be a totally new purpose-designed production line with cutting-edge technology. Reids say the redevelopment is vital for the future of their business and will allow their company to continue its growth trajectory and bring greater employment and benefits to the Christchurch area.



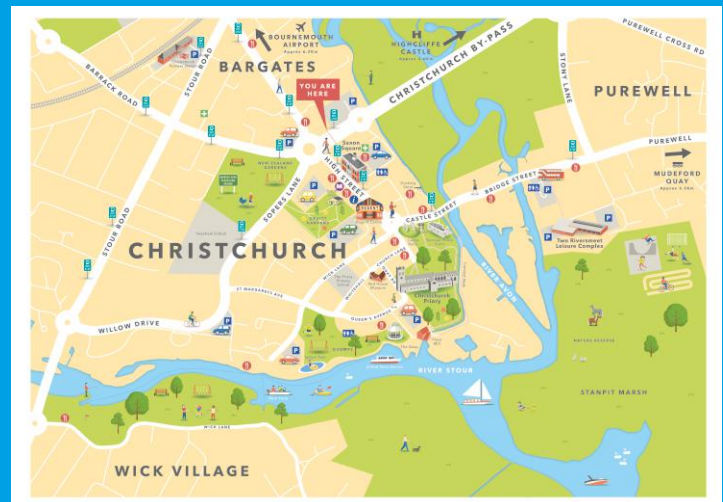
## Where am I?

Christchurch Chamber has been working with the BCP Council for a little while now to seriously improve the appearance of the underpass connecting Bargates to the High Street, as it was not the most attractive entry into the town. The Council has upgraded the lighting so that it is much brighter and safer for pedestrians at any time of day or night, as well as giving it a deep clean and resurfacing the steps.

The next stage is now underway, and the Christchurch Chamber has sponsored this map designed by BCP Council to help visitors to the town find out what there is to see, where to eat, attractions and so on. A large version of the map will be on the wall just as you enter from the Bargates end and will also have a QR code which can be scanned to go to the tourism website to tell visitors more about Christchurch.

Together with the map, iconic shots of Christchurch will be wall-wrapped to make the underpass bright and welcoming, as well as giving a taster of what the town has to offer.

The Chamber is delighted with all these improvements and the excellent working relationship it has with BCP Council, to help promote Christchurch as a tourism destination which in turn benefits local businesses.



# Back To Business!

So...how was it for you?

Everyone we meet seems to ask this question, and everyone has their own story to tell. As printers, we deal with a diverse range of local businesses, and it's been a real eye-opener to observe the different type of challenges people have faced over the last 18 months. It has also been quite inspiring to see how people have risen to those challenges and adapted their businesses to survive in the new environment.

Another positive aspect of the pandemic has been a renewed will amongst local businesses to support each other through the crisis. During lockdowns my immediate business neighbours formed a WhatsApp group – we kept an eye on each other's premises, took deliveries for each other, and kept ourselves up to date with news, particularly on available grant support that we may have been eligible for.

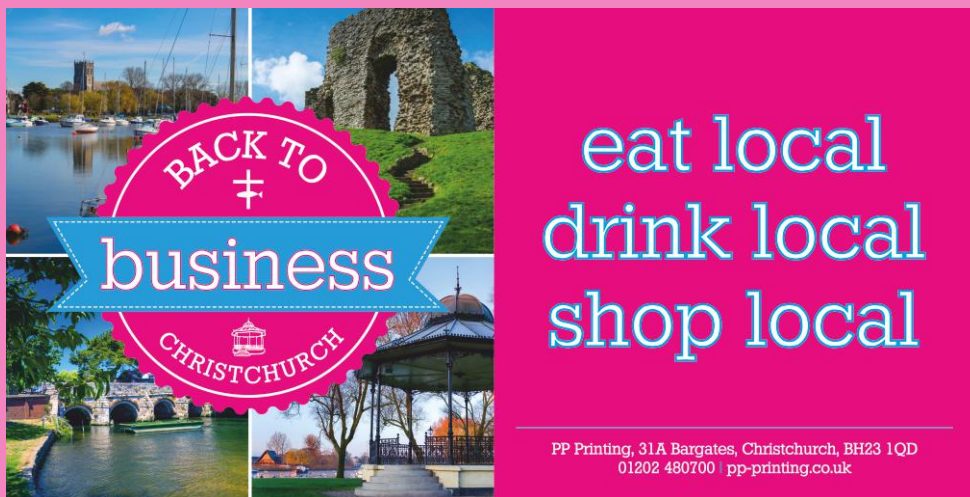
So when our (quite brilliant, incidentally) accountant alerted us to a BCP "Bounce Back" grant opportunity, we applied as soon as we could. It was quite a rigorous application process, but we were delighted to be awarded the grant earlier in the summer.

Our pitch was that we wanted to help Christchurch traders as they went "Back to Business" during 2021. We wanted to focus on our display range of print products – posters, foamex boards, flags and vinyl banners in particular – as the idea was to shout about the fact that we were open and ready to trade in a safe and adapted way.

We were able to offer business a 50% discount on this range, which we promoted heavily online, through leafletting and, of course, using posters and banners ourselves. The response we received was terrific, and we are planning further promotions for the Autumn.

We also wanted to use the grant cash to offer support to some of the local organisations that do so much for our local community, often run by people who offer their valuable time free of charge. The Chamber of Trade and Commerce is a fine example of this, so we were pleased to be able to sponsor this issue of Chamber Chat.

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## The Christchurch Town Plan that Wasn't

So incensed were Christchurch Town Council at the discovery of emails about proposals for major changes to the town, that they called a Full Town Council meeting on the 1st July and summoned BCP Council Deputy Leader Cllr Phillip Broadhead to explain.

The emails that had caused the fuss were from Cllr Nigel Brooks containing suggestions for a one-way traffic system in the high street, the demolition and rebuilding of the Saxon Square car park with an extra storey, an extra storey on the Waitrose car park, a master plan for the redevelopment of the Civic Offices and a Canford Bottom-style set up at the Stony Lane roundabout.

As the Town Councillors seethed at not being consulted, Cllr Phillip Broadhead promised that these were just emails and were in no way proposals or policy. Full assurances were given that as and when any plans were considered, full consultation would be taken at every step. Two interesting things did emerge from the discussions that followed.

First was that we should be expecting a consultation before long over the future of the Civic Centre site. The Council-owned land surrounding the Christchurch Civic Centre is large and some form of redevelopment is clearly envisaged. The area includes the leisure centre at Two Riversmeet and Cllr Broadhead was quick to assure the Town Council that the retention of a leisure centre would always be a priority.

Second was the raising of the question of an outer Christchurch bypass – a long running issue that has been looked into in detail on a number of occasions. Far from dismissing the idea, Cllr Broadhead disclosed that whilst there is no BCP policy on this, he personally would be in favour of it being looked at again.

# Visiting Angels

New Chamber member, Steve Fewings, tells us about his new Christchurch Business.

Justyna and I recently moved from Brighton to our new home in New Milton with our 8-year-old son Ted. What a beautiful part of the world, our move has proved to be a great decision.

We became a couple 12 years ago having met at work whilst travelling the world as airline cabin crew. Justyna went on to enjoy a career in the NHS as a community carer and Physiotherapist, which she continued throughout the pandemic. I continued to fly around the world as a Customer Service Manager with a flagship airline until aviation was badly affected by Covid-19 and I became redundant losing the job I loved.

This prompted home schooling, a house move and a new Visiting Angels business in Christchurch.

Bringing our Visiting Angels Christchurch office and our passion for quality at home care to Dorset and the New Forest makes us feel that we have come home!

Thank you for the warm welcome, we truly look forward to meeting and supporting the community in any way possible.

Our Angels can visit from one hour each week to every day, for as long as you need help: Companion & Social Care, transport to shops, GP appointments, walks, food preparation, Personal Care, Dementia & Alzheimer's Care, Post-Hospital Stay Care, Palliative End of Life Care and more.

Our Staff are fully trained on infection control, and we have Extensive stocks of PPE. We are taking every step to ensure that we keep our clients, their families, and our staff as safe as possible. Our caregivers are carefully selected. We find excellent people with the right mix of skills, experience, and a true caring nature, so that they can provide consistently superior home care.

We are there if you need us.



## Join the Chamber - today!

Whatever your business, be it big or small, be it retail, service provision or manufacturing or anything else, we are here to help you—help you to talk to others, keep in touch with what is going on, find suppliers and promote your own business.

We are a non-profit making subscription-based association of local businesses that support one another and represent our combined interests. We are a non-political body, so we can support or oppose any proposals that affect our business community. We cover the whole of the former borough of Christchurch from Highcliffe to Hurn.

As well as this newsletter, we have friendly, informal social events (re-starting as soon as conditions permit) and they are a great way to meet other business people in Christchurch as well as an opportunity to showcase your business by sponsorship. We are always keen to listen to what our members want for the Christchurch area to help their enterprises.

The Chamber is working closely with BCP Council and are well represented on their Economic Development, Tourism, Planning Strategy Committees and other organisations important to Christchurch's future.

To join us go to our website [www.christchurchchamber.co.uk](http://www.christchurchchamber.co.uk) and follow the link to join. Membership starts from only £35 per annum!

Sue Harmon-Smith  
Secretary, Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce

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# New year, new projects and a new Vice President

Hopes of a lively social event on the 23rd June were dashed again by the imposition of another round of restrictions, so the Chamber's 91st Annual General Meeting had to be a Zoom gathering – for the second year running.

Our President Andy Barfield was able to recount the hard work undertaken in the liaison with many parts of the BCP Council over the ever-changing Covid-19 requirements imposed on our local businesses over the last 12 months. He was pleased how the Chamber's views had been listened to and he particularly thanked the BCP Council Economic Development Officer Paula Sales for all the input and support she had given.

The year's successes were recounted. This included the publication and delivery of this hardcopy newsletter during lockdown and the work undertaken by Tim Lloyd to support hospitality on the Destination Management Board.

It was also announced the Chamber had successfully obtained funding to run local training courses over this coming next year. This would be a new and exciting project – see the article in this edition as to the first ones being organised.

Andy Barfield was unanimously returned as President for another year, and Suzanne Kadziola was unanimously voted in as the Chamber's new Vice President. Suzanne is a partner at local Solicitors Williams Thompson Solicitors LLP and has been on the Chamber's Executive for a number of years, as well as being involved with the current BID application.

Suzanne confirmed how she was honoured to take up the role but recognised how the lockdowns had resulted in really tough conditions for many of the Chamber's members and how important the role of the Chamber had become.

The Election of the Officers and Executive of the Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce for 2021/2022 in full were:

**President** - Andrew Barfield

**Vice-President (and Events)** - Suzanne Kadziola

**Treasurer** - Lucy Filer

**Secretary & Membership** - Sue Harmon-Smith

**Planning** - Bob Atkins

**Tourism** - Tim Lloyd

**Airport** - Peter Thorne

**Communications** - Peter Watson-Lee

Paula Sales would continue to be the representative from BCP Council's Economic Development



Suzanne Kadziola –  
Our new Vice President

## Thoughts from the President

Well, an interesting couple of months since the last Chamber Chat.

Your chamber has had some major successes and created some major meetings on behalf of members.

1. We have had a meeting with Head of Planning at BCP and the Deputy Leader of BCP to understand the delays in the Development of the Police station site, which will bring much needed low cost housing in the town centre, more shops and the educational science centre. We are pleased to say this application which gained planning some time ago is now moving forward with a focusing of minds on the common goal. This development will also release over a million pounds for local charities in Christchurch.
2. We have met with the President of Dorset Chamber and the President of Bournemouth Chamber and discussed the main factors that are affecting businesses across the conurbation and what we can do to assist the economic development of the area.
3. We continue to meet regularly with the economic development team of BCP council to understand what grants are becoming available and how to access help for small and large businesses and continue to direct businesses to the help available.
4. We applied for a training grant under the BCP ARG 3 fund to provide free at point of delivery training and are pleased to say we have been awarded the full amount we requested of £27,120. We have already started putting training dates and courses in place which will run through the winter up to 31st March 2021. If you are interested in attending one of our businesses courses or wish to present at one and promote your company please get in touch.
5. We are actively promoting the Christchurch BID and were pleased to attend a very well attended launch party in the grounds of Priory House. Ballot papers will be arriving to businesses in the BID Area during September.
6. And of course we continue to assist members with any problems they may have, either assisting directly or signposting to the organization that is best fit; promoting a B2B community in Christchurch and promoting the trade local and spend local philosophy.

On a personal note, how encouraging it is that our young adults are preparing to go off to their chosen universities and colleges or are leaving school or college and entering the workplace through an approved training scheme / apprenticeship. Many local businesses are accessing the funding and support available for apprenticeships from Brick layers, Carpenters, Plumbing, Boat Builders, Architects, Accountants, Retail, Hospitality, and Solicitors.

I look forward to seeing you at one of the training events, or our 5 o'clock 'catch up and chat' club.  
Wishing you a happy autumn's trading

Andy Barfield, President of Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce



# Hospitality - now for the post pandemic challenges!

Whilst it was very tough for hospitality during the three lockdowns it appears that my industry is struggling even more now that we have been allowed to re-open. Sadly we are having difficulty recruiting across the board in hotels and restaurants, especially in terms of chefs and experienced service staff.

The reason for this is two-fold, the image of hospitality as a career has been damaged. It is definitely associated with long and often anti-social hours together with poor pay and secondly the effects of Brexit which has resulted in a lot of hospitality workers from overseas returning to their home countries and not able to get back in due to new migration restrictions.

If I may tackle the first element. The industry has much improved on wages and the rates of pay are very often above the living wage and the majority of employees receive a share of gratuities too. However, in the case of Chefs, whilst they earn a higher rate of pay they are often having to work split shifts and weekends. The shortage of these key workers have resulted in a "pay war" with some places offering exceptionally high salaries that will not be sustainable through the winter months. One must remember that there is only so much a customer will pay for their "burger" and the venue must operate as a successful business too.

Many industry professionals have re-trained for other careers indeed one of our senior chefs has retrained as a stonemason! Another local head chef is leaving behind an esteemed career to be a plumber and, closer to home, one of my assistant managers has moved into retail just to avoid the long hours.

In Scotland it is widely thought that the current state of hospitality is not down to the way Nicola Sturgeon has dealt with additional and often longer lockdowns associated with the pandemic but it is the fault of Boris Johnson and his failure to address the after effects of Brexit. He is being urged to review the rules surrounding lower paid European citizens being allowed to come into the UK.

At this time the minimum wage of an overseas worker being allowed to work in the UK works in tandem with a points system with the candidates needing to be sponsored and achieve a minimum of 70 points in the rating scale (More details can be found on the government website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

In our area of Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch there are a number of restaurants that have taken the difficult decision to close for part of the week despite it being the time to maximise on summer trading, this is just to enable their staff to have two days off to re-charge their batteries. Others are doing reduced services such as just opening for dinner rather than lunch and dinner.

It is a real hardship for the industry and very tough on those people that continue to work within it and something that we really didn't envisage, to this degree, post lockdown.

All that we ask is that you, as customers, continue to enjoy what we all have to offer but please try to remember what may be going on behind the scenes. Be a little more patient and kind than you might normally be! It will be worth it I promise.

Tim Lloyd  
Captain's Club Hotel



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