



CHRISTCHURCH CHAMBER CHAT

Issue 6 - Mar 2022

Highcliffe businesses reject proposals for the removal of on-street parking

In a packed meeting on Tuesday evening, around forty local Highcliffe traders and business owners voted down proposals made by the Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council to remove all the on-street and lay-by parking from the Lymington Road High Street.

The suggestion that the free on-street parking should be removed was one of a package of ideas put forward in Parish Council's 'The Future of Your High Street' paper.

Councillors Nigel Brookes, Bob Hutchings and Andy Martin opened the meeting by explaining the ideas put forward but making the point that they were attending the meeting to listen to the local businesses.

It quickly came apparent from all those who spoke that the mood was strongly against the removal of the parking which was seen as a key attraction for Highcliffe over the rival shopping areas near-by. It was felt customers valued the ability to park near the shops. Indeed, complaints were made that the increased use of double yellow line in the roads just off the main high street was already causing problems and should be removed.

A vote taken part way through the meeting showed universal opposition to the removal of the on-street and lay-by parking among the business owners.

All recognised the problem was the volume of traffic that is directed down the high street and, in particular, concern over the numerous heavy lorries that use the road with all the congestion and safety problems that causes. A weight restriction on the vehicles using the road would be welcomed, but might not be easy to achieve.

Among the other proposals made, a paper vote taken showed that an additional pedestrian crossing and urgent work to resolve the uneven pavements in the village were both items that received overwhelming support. Some business owners told of witnessing numerous falls due to the bumpy pavements.

Other proposals receiving strong support were the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit and the extension of the parking in Wortley Road to one hour. Proposals for the removal of the bus pull in and the removal of the central white line were both voted down strongly.

The meeting was organised by the Christchurch Chamber of Trade & Commerce together with the Highcliffe Action Group (H.A.T.), to ensure that the voice of local businesses could be heard before the proposals were taken any further forward.

The meeting was chaired by the Chamber's Vice-President, and local Highcliffe resident, Suzanne Kadziola (pictured) and held at the Highcliffe Golf Club who kindly provided the venue for the meeting.



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Christchurch-based consultancy celebrates 18th birthday

Pro2col, leading UK experts in Managed File Transfer, are celebrating their 18th birthday this month.

Founded by Managing Director James Lewis back in 2004, Pro2col have grown into a national brand from its Dorset roots and have been headquartered in Christchurch since November 2020.. The company now work with some of the biggest companies and organisations in the UK, counting Sports Direct, Primark, EDF and Genomics England amongst their customers.

James said: " When I started this company from my bedroom all those years ago, never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be celebrating 18 years in business. If you told me back then that we'd be working with the likes of the TalkTalk, Virgin Money and Next, I simply wouldn't have believed you. It's a testament to the brilliant colleagues and partners we've had over the years and the hard work my team puts in every day that we've been able to grow and establish ourselves as a leading voice in the world of Managed File Transfer ."

Over the last 24 months the business has grown rapidly with a 40% year-on-year increase in head count.

As part of their 18th birthday celebration, Pro2col have committed to planting a tree for every customer they have worked with, every employee to have worked in the team and one tree for every year they have been in business. All-in that will see Pro2col plant over 1000 trees in 2022.

Pro2col are independent experts in secure managed file transfer, workflow automation and system integration, advising organisations through the different stages of their file transfer and integration project to make sure it is a success.

Find out more at <https://pro2col.com/> or speak to an expert on +44 (0) 20 7118 9640.

Tell us your news

Chamber Chat is all 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.

As well as being widely distributed electronically and on social media, around 750 copies of this Chamber Chat are being physically delivered free to businesses across Christchurch, Highcliffe, Somerford, Mundeford, Burton, Barrack Road, Fairmile and up to the airport. Its printing is paid for by its adverts—with any surplus funds going towards the Chambers future's activities. If you would like to advertise in future editions then contact Sue Harmon-Smith on 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.

Peter Watson-Lee. .Editor.

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Come to our big Chamber double-decker event

Thursday 28th April 2022

Come to the fabulous riverside Captain's Club Hotel on Thursday 28th April and get back involved with the Christchurch business community – or, if you have not been before, come along to meet us. You will find us very welcoming.

To tempt you along, we have two back-to-back events lined up for you:

[4.30 p.m.: The Chamber's AGM](#)

This part is open to members only. But if you are one, come and witness President Andy Barfield's last stand as he reports on his years in office in the strangest of times. Then cast your vote for the new Executive of the Chamber and welcome our new President - and hear her exciting plans for the forthcoming year.

[5.00 p.m.: The Five O'clock Club](#)

Sponsored by Williams Thompson Solicitors LLP

The AGM will then be followed by our famous 'Five O'clock Club'. Open to all members and all BID Levy payers (see article below) and all who might be interested in finding out more about us and/or be thinking of joining. A strictly informal get together with a sponsored free drink, nibbles and a chance to socialise and chat with old friends and new contacts.

Many thanks to the Captain's Club for generously sponsoring the successful March Five O'clock Club drinks.

Chamber's free Training Courses SUCCESS

The Chamber was delighted last summer when our application for funding was successful and we obtained funding from BCP Council to run a whole series of courses to help local businesses get back on their feet after the pandemic.

The grant enabled us to run 30 courses from September to March on a whole raft of subjects, which would help businesses and their staff. The practical subjects, such as Emergency First Aid and How to Use a Fire Extinguisher so appealed that we had to run both courses several times to fit in all the applicants!

Other courses looked at management topics like Supporting Remote Working, which was particularly relevant given how so many were working from home during and after the pandemic.

Managing Team Conflict and Managing Teams also proved popular and were run by a Poole based training company called Locomotivation. Chamber Members, Olyvetree did four courses on HR and Employment Law, whilst 1st Response Training did Fire Safety and the invaluable Mental Health at Work.

The feedback from those attending the courses has been brilliant, which was very gratifying. And the location of the Captain's Club Hotel got a big thumbs up from all the delegates!

The Chamber will definitely be looking to apply for a such a grant again so watch this space for future courses which were totally free of charge for everyone.

Are you a BID business? Then join the Chamber for free!

You will see the article on the back page from Christina Pengelly, the new BID Manager, about all the great work that is underway.

But are you aware that so keen are we to be working together, that we have reached an arrangement so that all the BID levy payers are automatically able to join the Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce with no further contribution required?

So, if you are a levy payer, do come along to the AGM and Five O'Clock Club on 28th April at the Captain's Club and enjoy socialising with a free drink and nibbles.

And what is more, email our Chamber Secretary sueharmonsmith@gmail.com, and Sue will ensure you are recorded as a member of the Chamber - entitling you to attend and vote at the AGM, receive our emails and event news and much more. You could even contribute to future editions of this Christchurch Chat.

Go on, send her an email now.

The Covid Years at Taylor Made Designs

by James Taylor,
Taylor Made Designs

One of our members recounts the dramatic challenges of last two years

Taylor Made Designs (TMD) is a corporate uniform and workwear provider, trading since 1993. Pre-Covid we employed a team of 33 and all was pretty good. 2019 was our 'best year yet'. It wasn't without its challenges but in terms of sales and profitability, we were very pleased with our performance.

2020 started well and I was looking forward to going to America for my 50th birthday ski trip. Although Covid had been in the news, none of us had any idea of what the impact would be.

My ski buddies and I jetted off at the beginning of March, but 3 days into the holiday, one by one we were all hit with what we now know to have been Covid-19. By mid-week the Hilton had closed all bars and restaurants in their hotels worldwide and we were confined to our rooms. Not what we were hoping for. On returning to the UK on the March 13 we began to see the full impact and as we all know, the PM closed the country down on the 23rd March.

In the business, we were all in shock. The next few days were spent finding out which of our customers were still operational. Our core clients are leisure centres, hotels & hospitality, garden centres, care homes, special needs education providers and cruise lines. Quite a diverse mix that ultimately became the saving grace for the business. Pretty much immediately our sales dropped by 90% as the whole country stood still. But as the days went by the operational customers started requesting PPE and they wanted it NOW. As a workwear supplier, we had to pivot quickly into this market and fulfil orders. However, access to product from our usual UK suppliers dried up within a couple weeks due to the high demand and we were faced with a supply chain issue. The prices of PPE items shot up and it became increasingly difficult to get hold of.

By mid-April our garden centre, care home and special needs education customers were still ordering uniforms and the PPE enquiries were coming in thick and fast, but we were really struggling to get hold of the stock. So, we took the huge decision to buy our own PPE in bulk from our regular suppliers in China. This was a make-or-break gamble. We were using most of our cash reserves to make upfront purchases from China. It was a difficult and risky decision. We had to go for it to survive as we were unable to reduce our running costs quickly enough. Once the PPE orders were placed, we had to wait 4-6 weeks for the containers to reach the UK. When they arrived, the stock had all been pre-sold and cashflow started to improve.

By May sales were around 30% of our normal revenue and we only had the reserves to keep the business going for 3-4 months. Luckily in March the government stepped in with the Furlough scheme which enabled us to pay the team and reduce our overheads by around 65%. We have an incredibly loyal and talented team that we are hugely proud of. Most of them were keen to do what they could and wanted to continue to work so we were very lucky. However, some of the team wanted to stay at home, which we were also very happy to accommodate.

By June, the customers that were open, like the care sector, needed uniforms & PPE urgently. This enabled us to carry on running our embroidery and printing machines to fulfil our orders. But only about a quarter of our team were working so it was extremely difficult to maintain delivery & service levels. Eight of us operated the business in our own bubble as best we could. The production team was down from 14 to 3. Our accounts team was down from 3 to 1 and our sales and operations team were down from 15 to 4. Our suppliers were in the same boat and had staff on furlough as well or had Covid themselves. So, we had challenges coming at us from all sides just to fulfil our everyday orders, which we badly needed to bring cash into the business.

By mid-June our PPE containers had arrived from China. We got consignments offloaded, despatched and invoiced ASAP. Those in our team working were putting in 8-10 hour shifts to keep the business running.

As the year progressed, we did our best to manage team levels as the country opened and closed with hardly any notice. Every day was a continual learning curve. This was when our staff showed their flexibility and trust in us. The furlough scheme enabled us to be flexible. We all need to remember, for the individuals on furlough, it was hugely worrying and stressful. The fear of a job loss was always present. Some of our team also live alone so we were also conscious of the mental health impact the reduction in social contact might have on them.

We were incredibly thankful to finish the year at around 50% of our pre-Covid revenue, which meant, once all the furlough and the grant was taken into account, a breakeven position for the business.

2021 was a slow start as the lockdown was imposed in January until mid-March. Then the floodgates opened and we now had the opposite extreme with all the business we used to serve opening again and all wanting our products and services at the same time. Demand tripled over night but we were still grappling with a reduced staff team and supply chain issues. We went from receiving 10-20 orders a day to 40-50.

We brought as many of the team back into the business as we could and it was 'all hands to the pump'. With high demand comes high stock purchasing costs. Within weeks, we had maxed out our supplier's credit lines and hit a cash flow wall. Cash became king and our accounts department were on the phones getting payments in to stay ahead of the wave and keep our suppliers paid. This lasted all year and into 2022, and our supply chain issues are still extremely challenging. The shippers have increased the price of containers by 500% which is having a huge impact on the price of goods coming into the UK, not to mention the lead times on containers coming over from the Far East.

We have to be as agile and creative as we can with the tools and energy we have available. Our expertise is in sourcing uniforms and other products from all over the UK and the world so our work is needed more than ever before. We continue to focus on sourcing products to ensure our customers' orders are fulfilled.

Our objective for the year ahead is to provide the best service we can to our loyal and appreciated customer base and live to fight another day. As we have all seen in recent weeks, there are many, many people in worse off situations than us and we will always be very grateful to still be here and smiling (most of the time).



A brand new and exciting local Business Awards for Christchurch has been launched.

There are 14 awards categories covering the whole range of businesses and from the winners will be chosen an 'Overall Business of the Year'.

What is more, entry is free. The role of the awards is to promote the range and quality of local business.

Nominations opened on the 15th March and close at 2p.m. on the 16th May 2022 with a lunchtime awards ceremony on Thursday 28th June to be held at the Captain's Club Hotel in Christchurch.

For full details of the awards and how to enter, go to www.christchurchbusinessawards.co.uk.

You have nothing to lose – go on - put an application in!

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Major boost for local hospitality

BAHA (BH area hospitality Association) has been successful for grant funding in the sum of £500,000. Yes, you heard right, half a million pounds!

This funding is being split into 4 projects:

- £100,000 is being used for a research project to understand where our existing customers come from and why they visit and to identify new customers.

- £150,000 is earmarked for a marketing campaign for the spring and summer of this year to drive customers to not only visit but to stay in our area. We already know that a staying visitor has a much higher spend than a day visitor. The Coastal BID Have contributed a further £50,000 towards this marketing campaign.

- The final two projects, worth £250,000, centre on the staffing and skills shortage across our industry. BAHA will be working with the International Language Sector to encourage young people aged 18-30 to apply for the Youth Mobility Scheme. This gives two year working visas to students from South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan; we will encourage these students to come to the BCP area and will get them jobs in the hospitality industry.

- BAHA will also be encouraging young people from our area to seriously look at Hospitality as a worthwhile career choice. They have commissioned a video, along the lines of a TV commercial to showcase the benefits of working in hospitality and have interviewed a number of people locally who have made hospitality their career. BAHA are already undertaking visits to secondary schools across BCP and inviting students to visit venues to get a greater understanding of the lifestyle of hospitality workers. We really need to change the outdated perception of our industry and to grow our local talent.

Tim Lloyd
Captain's Club

Christchurch Carnival 2022 – Bigger and Better



Could you enter a float?

The Carnival will return, bigger and better, this year after the last two years of Covid difficulties.

In 2020 we could not hold it at all, and in 2021, given permission at the last minute, managed to run the main events, but not the Parade, due to Social Distancing issues.

So, this year the dates are 13/14th August 2022. The main events will be much as usual, lots of stalls, food and drink, events, live music, funfair, the ever-popular dog show, and fireworks on the Quay on Saturday night. However, this year we want to reinstate the Parade through the town centre on Sunday afternoon, as people missed it last year with many comments on Facebook about this.

In previous years we have had some difficulty in getting enough people to join in the Parade. We have some good ideas for this year, but few commitments yet. We would love it if some members of the Chamber could consider how they/their business could join in the parade. On a float, walking, dancing, or some other method of ambulation. Something bright, jolly, funny, and good for promoting their business also!

We are also always looking for volunteers to help with the organisation as the Parade does require more on-the-ground help.

And finally, as if I haven't asked for enough, we really need some more sponsorship from local businesses. I completely realise how bad the last couple of years have been in trading terms for many businesses but hope there might be some who have weathered the Covid storm rather better than others and would love to be involved in helping the Carnival, and we can promise some good PR in exchange as well!

If anyone would like to discuss any of these possibilities more, you can get me on viv@charrett.com.

Thanks a lot! Viv Charrett (Chair)

Christchurch Food Festival

After more than 20 years the well-respected Christchurch Food Festival is now operated by Real Food Festivals under the guidance of their founder Philip Lowery. Following the huge success of their first festival in charge last August bank holiday, this time the event has been moved to coincide with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend in June.

Once again there will be an abundance of food, drink and artisan traders located on the Quomps (The park adjacent to the river Stour which includes the bandstand and splash park) and as usual, this will be supported by live entertainment including the "sheep show", lots of music and a cookery demonstration theatre that is being coordinated by James Golding, Chef Director at the Pig Group in association with local chefs and his chef colleagues from across the country.

The atmosphere at this "free to visit" event is always great and there is plenty of space for you to buy food and drink from the stallholders and "picnic". The event will also support the charity work of the Christchurch Food Festival Education Trust. www.cffet.org.uk

The event will operate:-

Bank Holiday Thursday 2nd June 2022 10.00am until 8.00pm

Bank Holiday Friday 3rd June 2022 10.00am until 8.00pm

Saturday 4th June 2022 10.00am until 8.00pm

Sunday 5th June 2022 10.00am until 5.00pm

For up to date information on the run up to June please visit www.christchurchfoodfest.co.uk

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Highcliffe Food and Arts Festival back after a two-year break

Former Chamber President and Founder of the Christchurch Food Festival Mary Reader writes:

Following on from the successful growth of Christchurch Food Festival I was asked to advise on creating a food festival in Highcliffe in 2015. I am delighted to say that it was a resounding success and was run each year until Covid struck two years ago, which forced us to cancel the 2020 festival at a very late stage. Following a two year break due to Covid restrictions it will take place on Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th June this year.

Three years ago we formed a partnership with the Little Craft Shack and renamed the event as an arts festival, which encompasses not only artisan food and drink but also a huge range of specially curated crafts created by local crafters. We also have high quality musical entertainment from two music stages at either end of the village.

Work on sponsorship starts many months ahead and this year the headline sponsor is the Highcliffe Residents Association. Financial support is also being given by Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council and BCP Council. In addition, several local businesses are offering financial support as sponsors. This is pivotal both in boosting businesses in Highcliffe and in raising the profile of our village as a vibrant and welcoming community.

Organising a festival like this takes a huge amount of work and commitment and our team of volunteer directors and committee members are very grateful to everyone who is supporting us with financial help. The festival is a free-to-attend event, but we have a huge amount of expenditure to cover and are always pleased to have a conversation with any business who is interested in supporting us.

There are already more than 120 traders booked covering food, drink and crafts. The cookery theatre will be sponsored by Christchurch Harbour Hotel and will feature celebrity chefs Jean-Christophe Novelli and Lesley Waters. Leading local chefs will also be taking part including Alex Aitken from the Harbour Group, Luke Matthews from Chewton Glen and James Golding, Chef Director of the Pig Group of hotels.

Special emphasis this year will be to promote the event as a great family day out with plenty of children's entertainment including craft workshops, 'grow your own' and a Kids' kitchen. Special recycling bins provided by the fun team from 'Junk O Saurus' will remind visitors to recycle their litter in bins and to become more plastic free.

One of our new team members is working with both South West Rail who are putting our posters on their stations from Basingstoke to Bournemouth and Beryl Bikes who are hoping to run a national design competition with us and provide more bikes at Hinton Admiral station. Another new team member is supporting me with the creating a large PR campaign and both the Echo group and New Milton Advertiser are backing us with sponsorship, giving additional value to our marketing campaign.

Printed programmes will be available in late April, but for more details see www.highcliffefoodandartsfestival.co.uk or do get in touch with me by email at readercomm@aol.com



What a start to the town BID

It has only been 5 months since the Christchurch Business Improvement District (BID) began, and what an impact it has had already. Since November we have:-

- Welcomed our BID manager, Christina Pengelly, to lead the BID work, from her office in Druitt Hall, in the heart of the BID district.
- Run a fun Pancake Race for businesses which took place on Shrove Tuesday, with Frettons taking home the trophy for another year.
- Upcoming events include a Children's Tea Jubilee Tea Party & Cupcake Competition in Druitt Gardens on 4th June, Street Music, and a few cultural events. Check out our Events page on our website, <https://www.christchurchbid.co.uk/event/>
- To celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in the town, we will be funding hanging baskets and bunting across the town centre. We are working with the Cleaner, Greener, Safe team to clean up Christchurch, and we have introduced a Beryl Bike cycle-to-work scheme for employees of the BID.
- We are planning some fun trails that will lead shoppers through the High Street and Bargates and surrounding area to find the magic letters in shop windows. Shop Trails will take place at Easter, the Jubilee, and Christmas.
- The BID connected Wessex Water and Bargates businesses through the recent road works, assisting the businesses with their compensation claims, and promoting a BUSINESS AS USUAL campaign of posters, banners, and advertorials.
- We are working on a coordinated approach between retailers, the Police, and our new CSAS officers, to enhance the safety and security in Christchurch. This includes CCTV to report real-time crime, to make Christchurch a safer place to work, live, and shop.
- And finally, we have joined forces with the Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce to enable all our levy payers to benefit and enjoy the networking and training the Chamber offers.

It's going to be a great year for Christchurch, and we look forward to bringing more projects and events to the town.

Have a question, comment, or idea for Christchurch? Email hello@christchurchbid.co.uk. We would love to hear from you!

Christina Pengelly - Christchurch BID Lead



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