



# CHRISTCHURCH CHAMBER CHAT

Issue 8 - June 2023

## Music festival returns for 2023

The Christchurch Music Festival is back for the first time since 2019, and it promises to be an unforgettable experience for music lovers of all ages. The new organisers are injecting fun and good vibes into the area with a fresh new approach and family focus. Taking place on Christchurch Quay from Friday 21<sup>st</sup> to Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, it is sure to be a weekend not to be missed.

The festival boasts an impressive line-up, with a mix of talented local musicians and tribute acts that will have you dancing the night away. With so much talent on show, it's hard to know where to begin. If you're a fan of ska, then Rat Race is a must-see. Their high-energy performances are guaranteed to get you on your feet and dancing along. If soul and funk is more your thing, then you won't want to miss BB3. With their catchy hooks and memorable mash up's, their live set is sure to be a crowd-pleaser. For those who love a bit of nostalgia, Oasis tribute band transport you back to the 90s with their faithful renditions of the Manchester band's greatest hits.

The festival is also proud to showcase local talent, with performances from some of the area's most talented musicians. We Are Robot, Rory J Williams from Sunset Sons and Lady Winwoods Maggot are just a few of the acts that will be gracing the stage. Plus solo performances on the Bandstand from award-winning singer Millie Watson, Lloyd McGuigan, and up-and-coming artist Archie Ray. These talented artists are a testament to the thriving local music scene and demonstrate the festival's commitment to promoting homegrown talent.

But it's not just about the music. The festival has plenty of activities for families to enjoy. The KidZone is a special area dedicated to providing fun and entertainment for children of all ages. With local children's entertainers, dancers, face painters, and more, there's no chance of boredom setting in. And for those who need a break from the noise, the festival is holding a sensory tent, where noise levels will be kept to a minimum, providing a calm and peaceful environment for children and adults to come and chill out if it all gets a bit too much.

Helping Homeless Veterans UK (1195521) is the chosen charity for this year's festival, a truly brilliant charity in which 100% of all public donations are spent directly helping our country's homeless veterans.

Tickets for the festival went on sale on 31st March and have been flying out, so make sure you get yours now to avoid disappointment.

It promises to be an unforgettable experience for all who attend, and with such a fantastic line-up, it's sure to be a hit with music lovers of all ages. So mark your calendars, get your tickets, and prepare for a weekend of fantastic music, delicious food, and family-friendly fun. We'll see you there!

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# My year as President ...Suzanne Kadziola

...turned out to be very busy and a steep learning curve.

I was invited to attend the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group as a non voting member. The meeting took place every two weeks, alternating between Zoom and in person. It was very interesting finding out about what goes into placemaking and design codes as well as looking into all the green and open spaces in the conurbation. I did a lot of reading!



I also attended a couple of online meetings with the Dorset Safer Business Partnership which is attended by the Police and businesses to discuss topics such as crime reporting and cyber crime. This was very useful and there was some interesting information that came out of these meetings that was then circulated to Chamber members.

Unfortunately we had to take the decision to suspend the five o'clock club due to declining attendance and there are now other ideas for networking events being bounced around. Keep your eye on the Facebook page for updates.

Recently the Chamber planted a tree in commemoration of the late Queen's reign in Druitt Gardens. This is now there for all to see and hopefully it will flourish.

There is a new Presidents chain of office as the previous one was "full" and rather heavy. The new chain starts from 2000 and was funded by all the Presidents from 2000 up to my year. The previous chain is being kept by the local history society - it does, after all, go back 93 years. That's quite a bit of history on one chain.

I would like to thank everyone on the Executive Committee for all their hard work and support during my year as President. I am now stepping down from the Committee and pass the baton back to Andy Barfield.



## President's thoughts

I was delighted to be asked to serve another term as President, and look forward to an exciting year ahead. My thanks go to Suzanne who has worked tirelessly through her year in the role.

Your team on the Executive Committee has many years of experience in areas as diverse as manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, and the law. We're here to help you and your business succeed, so if you do have an issue please do get in touch.

We work closely with the BID, as well as the Town Council and BCP and always strive to provide Christchurch businesses with a voice.

For example, as we go to press one of the senior members of the committee is lobbying BCP to challenge some of the measures within the Parking Harmonisation that could have an effect on Town Centre businesses. We'll keep you posted on that one!

**Andy Barfield**

President Christchurch Chamber of Trade and Commerce



## Chamber marks Queen's passing

Following the sad loss of Queen Elizabeth II last September, the Chamber was keen to mark the end of her exceptional era as Monarch for over 70 years, acknowledging the huge changes and progress that had happened during her Reign.

And with the recent Coronation of King Charles III, it was a perfect time to commemorate both significant events with the planting of a Quercus Robur or an English Oak as it is better known, in the town's peaceful Druitt Gardens. This tree will, hopefully, outlive us all and will benefit the environment in general and wildlife in particular for centuries to come. The tree and its explanatory plaque can be seen on the main path through Druitt Gardens.

The photos show Mark Hooper Tree Care digging a big enough hole, with lots of manure, to give the tree a good start, together with the plaque.



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# Hello from Christchurch BID!

April showers have definitely brought in the May flowers. With the good weather starting, kick off the summer, with the Summer Shop Trail in Bargates and the Town Centre in June/July. Follow the trail and explore Christchurch's awesome shops to find the characters in the windows. It's an adventure that's bound to bring out the kid in you!

If Yoga's more your thing, then you're in luck. From May 7th to September 24th, 9:30 am to 10:30 am, we've got free yoga sessions happening at the Quay. Just bring a mat and a bottle of water and get ready to find your zen. These sessions are brought to you by Park Yoga and the local businesses of Christchurch, so you can take care of yourself while they take care of you.

And what's summer without some sweet tunes? This year, we're bringing the music to the streets of the town centre, Bargates, and surrounding areas. While you're out shopping, grabbing a bite, or sipping on a refreshing drink outside, enjoy the sweet sounds of original and cover songs by our talented street performers.

A new CSAS officer has been seconded to Christchurch for the next three months. Her first month will be talking to businesses and assessing the hot spots for crime and anti-social behaviour, while her remaining months will be spent in uniform.

Furthermore, we have collaborated with other BIDs in the region to introduce DISC, a crime-reporting system in the form of a user-friendly app. DISC allows you to upload images, audio, and video, as well as report crimes. Think of it as our very own "Shop Watch" initiative. We will provide training and education on how to use the app, and its rollout across the town is scheduled for the coming months. More information will be available as we progress with the implementation.

Best of all, all of these fun activities are brought to you by the local businesses themselves. who want you to have the best possible experience while shopping or doing business in town, and that's why they're committed to making Christchurch a beautiful and vibrant community.

Christina Pengelly  
Christchurch BID Lead  
[www.christchurchbid.co.uk](http://www.christchurchbid.co.uk)



# Tourism Update

With Christchurch being such a draw for tourists it is always difficult when things stand in the way.

Having dealt with the effects of the pandemic and then the highs of the first staycation we have now hit a levelling out period. Why levelling out? The cost-of-living crisis has resulted in an increase in energy costs, a rise in the costs of commodities such as food and drink and the rise in the living wage which has pushed hospitality businesses to the brink..... Yet again!

Sadly, places have had to close, and others are finding it extremely difficult to convert to bottom line. On top of this yet another forecast for a rise in interest rates means the cost of borrowing continues to rise. Without the necessary conversions then banks are unable to support business, but it seems harsh as the country is going through such a tough economic period and there does not seem to be any further help from central government.

Our industry continues to fight for a reduction in VAT for hospitality businesses as we are not on a level playing field with our European neighbours. Locally we have a highly creative hospitality lobbying group headed up by Andy Lennox (His business portfolio included Nusara Thai in Christchurch) called the Wonky Table and this has been evolving since the first lockdown. Not only does Wonky Table tackle the bigger issues but also provides a support networking platform for hospitality professionals across BCP.

Christchurch, however, seems to be riding the wave slightly better as Bournemouth hotels are reporting sales that are down 30% and rates for accommodation continue to fall as hoteliers compete for that last room sale. We are fortunate to work closely with other accommodation providers across Christchurch and we all appreciate that it is the bigger picture that we need to focus on, attract more visitors to our town, our beaches and show people that there is still so much to do whether the weather is good or bad.

Nevertheless, it is hard for everyone. We are unable to forecast business as people's movements are so unpredictable. Will the weather hold? Will the staycation continue to be in fashion? Or will the budget airlines whisk people away to destinations such as Spain, or Turkey? We must also ask the question will Dorset be able to compete against Devon and Cornwall?

Here at Captain's Club Hotel, we have been attracting a new audience from the midlands, a surprise to us! Without any specific advertising we have always welcomed people from the M4 corridor, London and, surprisingly, the West country. We have helped make these changes due to more influence on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram.

Priorities have changed hugely for tourism at local government level. With BCP council facing huge budget cuts it has meant the private sector are having to step up to the plate to try and bridge the gaps. Tourism in our region is so important for the local economy. We must help it.



The current tourism department at the council have looked at forming a link with local accommodation and attraction providers by offering them a "partnership." In this current year £34,000 was the income from the partnership and this money has gone directly into the tourism marketing pot to at least get us on the map as a destination.

Next the Destination Management Board, was set up to be a scrutiny body for the council, are now looking to completely change and become an independent CIC with the ability to apply for grants and funding to support tourism on a much bigger scale. This project has three months to reach stage one, the set up of the CIC and attract prospective investors and stakeholders. Watch this space from August!

Article prepared by Tim Lloyd – MD Captain's Club Hotel and Vice President Chamber of Trade

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# All change at BCP Council



Picture - Adam Sofianos

A new administration, the Three Towns Alliance, will lead Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council for the next term following May 23's Annual Council meeting.

The new administration has been formed from the Liberal Democrats (28 councillors), Christchurch Independents (8 councillors), Poole People Party (5 councillors) and The Bournemouth Independent Group (3 councillors).

It will be led by Cllr Vikki Slade in her second term in the BCP Council role. She was the first leader of BCP Council from May 2019 to October 2020. She said: "I am delighted and honoured to have been chosen to lead this council again.

"Making our town and local centres inviting so that everyone feels welcome, safe and wants to spend time there. And putting sustainability at the heart of what we do so that we can improve your lives now, and in the future. "

"The council needs to get the basics right and earn the trust and confidence of all our residents across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole before we can go on to deliver those more exciting projects that we all want to see... That work starts now."

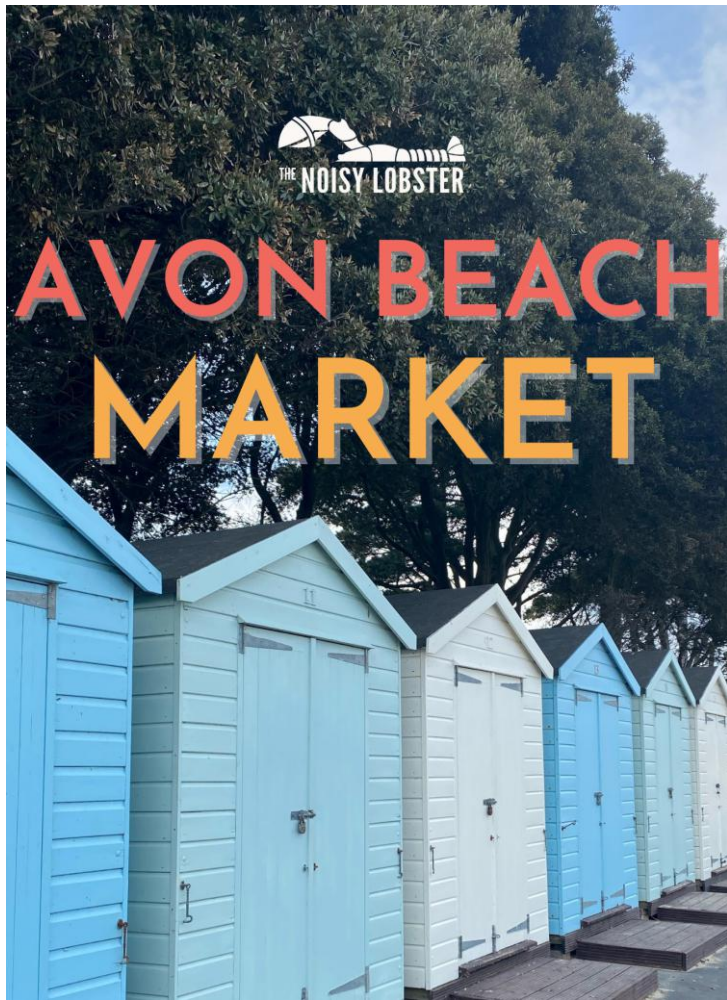
During the Council meeting, Council Leader Slade announced that her Cabinet would include:

- Cllr Millie Earl, Deputy Leader and Connected Communities
- Cllr David Brown, Health and Wellbeing
- Cllr Richard Burton, Children and Young People
- Cllr Mike Cox, Finance
- Cllr Andy Hadley, Climate Response, Environment and Energy
- Cllr Jeff Hanna, Transformation and Resource
- Cllr Andy Martin, Customer, Communications and Culture
- Cllr Kieron Wilson, Housing, Planning and Regulation

The Chair and Vice Chair of the council were also elected during the meeting, with Cllr Lesley Dedman elected Chair and Cllr Simon Bull elected Vice Chair.

More details about the new Cabinet can be seen here: [bcpcouncil.gov.uk/About-the-council/How-council-decisions-are-made/Cabinet.aspx](https://bcpcouncil.gov.uk/About-the-council/How-council-decisions-are-made/Cabinet.aspx)





New for 2023:

**The Avon Beach Market** is a showcase of the finest products from small local businesses! With its idyllic setting based in the Avon Beach Huts, the market offers a delightful shopping experience for both locals and visitors alike.

Trading season kicks off on the 12th of June, with a variety of local businesses involved. Throughout the summer, there are two additional weeks of trading commencing on the 26th of June and the 14th of August, ensuring that visitors have multiple opportunities to explore the market's offerings!

Nestled in the Beach Huts closest to The Noisy Lobster, the market boasts a diverse range of goods. Visitors can peruse through an array of local art, handcrafted jewellery, and unique beach-themed gifts. Whether you're looking for a one-of-a-kind souvenir or a special gift for a loved one, the Avon Beach Market has something to suit every taste.

Soak up the sun strolling along the beach and support some fantastic local talent this summer. Admission is free, and the market is open from Monday to Sunday, welcoming visitors from 9am until 6pm.

Avon Beach Market will be showcasing the best that Dorset has to offer! Whether you're a beachgoer, an art enthusiast, or simply someone seeking a delightful shopping experience, this market is a must-visit destination this summer.

## Dancing their way to success

Mad4Dance is a Christchurch-based dance and wellbeing centre, aiming to enrich the lives of children and young people in the community by providing professional dance training. It is home to the Mad4Dance school alongside the charity organisation 'Elevate Foundation' which focuses on improving the mental wellbeing of young people in our local area.

Mad4Dance opened its centre on Bargates 4 years ago, however it has been a part of the Christchurch community for 19 years, in that time teaching hundreds of students in a variety of styles including: Ballet, modern, street dance, tap, contemporary and acrobatic arts. The school offers several programs to encourage further development in dance, such as the Aspiring Dancers Program, street dance crews, and most recently the new Rising Stars membership which enables younger students to progress their training, grow in confidence and become a more active member in the dance school community.

The dance school's mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment where their students can grow, develop and succeed whilst building self-belief and confidence to achieve their hopes and dreams. Mad4Dance aims to give young people a greater sense of value and purpose and empower them to make the life-decisions that are right for them.



# Eat local. Drink local. Shop local.

The High Streets of Christchurch and Highcliffe have suffered a difficult period since the pandemic. As traders adjusted to the “new normal” they found themselves facing huge cost increases, particularly in energy bills. Add to that the traffic congestion suffered throughout the area during much of 2022/23 it’s no wonder there have been some high profile store closures.

Both NatWest and HSBC have announced they are to leave town during the summer - two very large spaces to fill. Mackays left earlier in the year, another prominent unit. In Bargates, it was particularly sad to see The Coffee Pot close for good after nearly 30 years of trading.

It really does seem to be the case of “use it or lose it” when it comes to our town centres.

Whilst various High Street initiatives are proposed, including a recent suggestion to pedestrianise Christchurch High Street and the possibility of High Street renewal funding from BCP, the bottom line is we all need to make a personal effort to support local retailers and restaurants, if we truly value them.

After all, do we really care if the shops close? “We should care,” points out Philip Lowery, organiser of the Christchurch Food Festival. This year’s Food Festival was held over the Bank Holiday weekend and brought an estimated 70,000 visitors to the town centre. The Food Festival received some criticism for its move from the High Street to the Quay, but Philip says “The High Street is the lifeblood of our town. If we lose that, we lose our whole sense of community.”

The Food Festival has worked with the BID (Business Improvement District) to offer street entertainment and promotions throughout Christchurch town centre. Lowery defends the decision to move the Festival to the Quay by observing that the increased sense of space means that the 70,000 visitors are freer to enjoy Christchurch at a more leisurely pace.

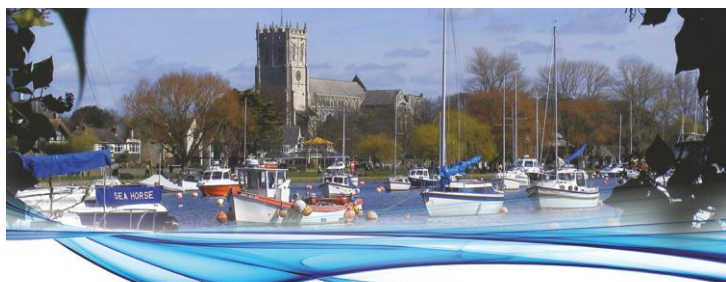
Even so, apart from occasional special events, we all shop online these days, don’t we? Rich Slater, General Manager at Sobo Beach venue comments - “You can buy pretty much anything you need online, but what you don’t get is the personal service.”

Christchurch is fortunate enough to boast a wide range of interesting and diverting retailers. You’ll find an independent record store, an independent book shop, lots of gift shops as well as galleries, jewellers and health food stores all under the Priory’s shadow.

Stroll up to Bargates for an independent wine store, a goldsmith and of course Castles, the legendary hardware store. At their recent stock take, they recorded 16,750 items in stock, which will surprise none of us who use it as their first port of call for those fiddly little items that need replacing around the home.

And when you’re all shopped out? The choice of restaurants, coffee shops, bars and eateries in Christchurch is second to none, and one of the main reasons the Food Festival exists in the first place. Whatever your taste or budget, there is plenty in town to suit.

So if we don’t want to see more empty units there seems to be one answer - let’s use our local businesses and enjoy them for as long as we can!



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## Tell us your news

Chamber Chat is all about Christchurch businesses small and large. If you are a Member of the Christchurch Chamber of Trade & 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, this issue of Chamber Chat is being physically delivered free to businesses across Christchurch, Highcliffe, Somerford, Mudeford, 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, contact Sue Harmon-Smith on [sueharmonsmith@gmail.com](mailto:sueharmonsmith@gmail.com). Not only will you be supporting the Chamber, 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 [andrew.barfield@gervis.co.uk](mailto:andrew.barfield@gervis.co.uk).

Andy Barfield, Editor.

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# New Football Academy is on the ball

Poria Hajabraham found himself with a bit of a problem when his football-mad son wanted to join a local group for extra training and development. There didn't seem to be one locally that had availability.

So Poria, owner of Cameron's Bar & Lounge in Bargates, decided the best thing to do would be to launch a youngsters Football Academy himself!

It wasn't an easy task as he soon found out. Securing a suitable site, training staff, proved quite the challenge, but finally he is thrilled to announce the launch of a new football academy, open to all children who love the beautiful game. Based in Mudeford, the academy is designed to provide a fun and engaging football experience for children of all ages and abilities, whether they are new to the sport or already have some experience.

All football coaches undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before they start working. The DBS check is an important safeguarding measure that helps to ensure that coaches do not have a history of criminal activity that could potentially put players at risk.

They offer training for all children from Under 5's to Under 12's, over a variety of sessions available throughout the week. Visit the website today for more information or to sign your child up today!

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## Evening parking rates under threat in Christchurch and Highcliffe

### Register your objection NOW

The future of the £2 evening parking rate in Christchurch - and free evening parking in Highcliffe - is under threat from the BCP Council.

It is urgent that as many of us as possible register our objection by Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June.

In the somewhat innocently titled consultation called 'Harmonising parking arrangements across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole', the BCP Council set out a plan to do away with evening and overnight rates and apply the daytime tariff charges for 24 hours and 7 days a week in all car-parks across the conurbation.

In Christchurch town centre, our long standing £1 for 2 hours parking has already gone and this latest consultation proposes the removal of the evening £2 parking rate. This would be a cruel and unwelcome blow to our evening economy which is now so important to the town given the difficult times that all town-centre businesses are facing.

It would mean the doubling of the parking costs and we believe it will cause major problems in discouraging the use of our Regent Centre, our Christchurch restaurants, wine bars, pubs and gyms etc.

In Highcliffe, it would remove the free parking after 7.00 p.m.. It is likely to have adverse effects in all the council car parks across the whole area.

In addition, it is proposed that in all car parks, 'High Season' will be deemed to commence from the 1<sup>st</sup> March and last for nine months until 31<sup>st</sup> October. It is bizarre to think of 1<sup>st</sup> March as the start of high season. The intention, of course, is to apply the higher high-season charges for 9 months a year.

Free parking in the Highcliffe cliff top parking will be curtailed and the lower out-of-season parking used by local residents across the whole of the old Christchurch borough will be significantly cut back.

And the reason for proposing all this? Apparently 'Harmonisation is needed...to improve efficiency of the service'. And, of course, to raise further monies without regard to the knock-on effects it will have to local businesses.

The BCP Council administration has changed in the last few weeks (see our article on page 3). It is not known yet what approach the new administration will be taking to these proposals, but it is essential that as many of us as possible register our objections to this so that the BCP Council are in no doubt as to the strength of opposition there is.

Go to the link [haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/parking-harmonisation](http://haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/parking-harmonisation) and complete the online survey. It must be completed by Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June.

And tell everyone you know to do the same. These changes will adversely affect our businesses and our customers.

SUPPORT THE CHRISTCHURCH CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES