

Darlington Market report following Scrutiny Committee 27th August 2020

Following the scrutiny meeting, we were asked to provide a commentary on the following:

1. Outdoor Market Relocation Impact on Footfall and Trader Numbers before and post move

- Town Centre Footfall figure to be provided by Darlington Council (Phil Haymer) but we believe there is an issue with their counters currently.
- Trader attendance figure pre and post lockdown can be summarised as:

Pre-lockdown 24 traders per week and post lockdown 25.33 traders per week; a reasonable increase.

- We have managed to attract a number of new casual traders; however we have seen some regular traders have chosen to move to other local markets.
- We plan to continue to increase the number of traders within the current location.

On the whole and in consideration of the impact of CV19 on town-centre footfall, we are pleased with progress.

Outdoor Market Strategy

- The Market square currently offers approx 975 sq m of usable space in the current format but consideration needs to be given to ensure that the access ramps onto the square are not obstructed, vehicle access and egress in maintained from Feethams / Church Row, queuing space for the Dolphin Centre and adequate space for the public to circulate the stalls following the CV19 distancing rules. In addition, the Market Square cannot be fully used due to the alfresco seating spaces for Number 16 Horse Market and The Hole in the Wall.
- In its current configuration, with CV19 distancing taken into account, the Market can accommodate 16 stalls due to the varying sizes of the self-erect stalls with current traders.
- We believe that a compromise position could include a traffic order in place and use the parking bays on Horse Market (outside the old town hall part of the market, shown in pink on the attached plan) as the main market area, either with stalls back to back down the centre of the space or side to side in the parking bays. From here, we could expand into the market square (shown in blue). This would provide a link to the Market Square from High Row / West Row and channel footfall in the direction of the Outer Market offer. Providing

traders a market location more visible to the higher footfall areas. It would also provide a link to the temperate garden once that has opened.

- This would provide a connection to the key footfall areas, while utilising the market square as the market expands and keeping the markets connection to the market hall.
- Spaces on the pavement along Tubwell Row (red) could also be utilised for additional trading areas. This area already has ground anchor points installed.
- The previous location of the Outer Market stalls on the main precinct did provide higher footfall / passing trade opportunities for traders but this meant that the outdoor market was disconnected from the market hall and neither benefited from each other. It is our role to consider the market service holistically and not to focus on individual pitches, although we are always receptive to trader comments and suggestions.
- Consideration would need to be given as to the type / style and size (maximum) stall that we would permit on a self-erect basis in the additional areas detailed above.
- If we revert back to providing uniformed gazebo style stalls, we would need to employ new operatives as we no longer have the staffing ability. Staffing costs associated with the build up and take down each market day have not been taken into account within the business case and would not prove affordable.
- While temporary signage has been installed by Darlington Council for the temporary relocation of the Market, a review of signage within the Town Centre would need to be undertaken to ensure that visitors to the Town have clear way-finding signage to direct them to the Market offer.
- Post lockdown, specialist markets have recommenced and have been held within the open area of the Market Hall. This area will be refurbished in the coming months as part of the Market Hall refurbishment project, alternative locations will need to be found. Where these events are taking place on Outer Market days, these could be located in the Market Square ensuring continuity of the locations of our regular traders

Social Media

- The Darlington Market Facebook Page in August had a reach of 61.1K. (see attached)
- Specific Outdoor Market posts reached 9K, but there were other generic market posts in addition to this. (see attached)
- Utilising our social media platforms is vital. In particular, our Facebook Page is growing month by month and reaches a huge amount of people, more specifically our target audience. Having a central hub of information that is an

interactive platform such as Facebook, helps us not only promote and market our offering but interact with our customers.

Summary

Although we are receptive to those outdoor market traders who show some resistance to the relocation of the outdoor market, we need to take a holistic, objective approach to providing a whole of market service and our plans will continue to promote the indoor and outdoor markets trading as one.

Outdoor market attendance is good considering the events of 2020 and we look forward to further expansion.

The trading forecasts will take the market service from a historical loss-making position to a post-development positive outcome, which we will also look to re-invest in part, back into the market service.

MAM (Darlington) Ltd. 4th September 2020