



THE GREAT HALL ARCADE

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

2

ANNUAL
REPORT



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
TOGETHER

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together CIC has now been in existence for 2 years. The past 12 months have seen significant growth in membership and in the range of projects that Royal Tunbridge Wells Together is delivering. We have increased our reach amongst the business community in Royal Tunbridge Wells and aim to continue this growth into 2018/19.

With no blueprint or guide to follow, Town Centre Management companies in all areas have to follow the needs, aspirations and aims of their own business community. Royal Tunbridge Wells Together is no different. We have been conducting one to one meetings with a diverse range of businesses, discussing their individual needs and requirements, finding out what can practically be done to improve the town centre for their business and staff.

We are pleased to announce the imminent commencement of a Business Improvement District Feasibility Study and Consultation, with a large sample of town centre based businesses. The first step of the process towards Royal Tunbridge Wells becoming a Business Improvement District (BID), this consultation will tell us what businesses' aims and aspirations are locally, and whether a BID could deliver solutions that would address these. We will publish the outcomes of this consultation early in the summer of 2018.

In last year's Annual Report, we were pleased to announce that we had 28 members, this has nearly doubled in the past 11 months and is continuing to grow all the time. We have improved the member benefits package and will continue to add tangible benefits that businesses and their staff expect.

This Annual Report covers all the major projects and initiatives that Royal Tunbridge Wells Together has worked on in the past 12 months. In addition to these major projects, we routinely help small businesses with advice on Business Rate Appeals, lend our offices to charities and community groups for meetings and facilitate as many activities that benefit the town centre as possible.

Thanks and recognition for their continued support for Royal Tunbridge Wells should be extended to the founding businesses; Arriva, AXA PPP Healthcare, Berkeley Homes, Cripps, Dandara, Fenwick, G. Collins & Son, Index Magazine, Markerstudy, Thomson Snell & Passmore, Trinity Theatre and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
TOGETHER

GRANTS PROGRAMME

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together sets aside a sum of £3,000 every year to support grants for community groups, charitable concerns or amenity societies who increase the vibrancy of the town centre by holding events. In the past 12 months, grants have been provided to The Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival, RTW Belgian Week, Local & Live Music Festival and Trinity Theatre. We will be maintaining these grants in 2018/19 and are in active discussions regarding forthcoming events with other groups.



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

We have published 3 Business Intelligence Reports in the past 12 months and are due to publish the 4th shortly. These reports cover key indicators on the health of the town centre; business start up rates, transport provider data, vacant units, business types, new openings and parking data. They have become popular documents and have been featured extensively in local press.

Past Business Intelligence Reports are available as PDF downloads from www.tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk

NETWORKING EVENTS

We held two networking events in the past 6 months and will aim to hold 4 events each year moving forward. These informal breakfast events are a networking opportunity for Royal Tunbridge Wells Together members. There is no charge to attend the events; they are a member benefit and provide members with the perfect opportunity to find local businesses that can supply and provide any services required. In December 2017, we invited members to attend an evening of ice skating in Calverley Grounds, with each member business entitled to 6 tickets for the event. It was a very enjoyable evening that we intend to repeat in 2018.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

We represented our members at the West Kent Jobs Fairs in September 2017 and March 2018, taking along a wide selection of vacancies in Tunbridge Wells. We will continue to perform this function at future jobs and training events and are building links with schools in East Sussex and Kent to ensure that Royal Tunbridge Wells is promoted as a great destination for work.

Tourism South East visited Royal Tunbridge Wells in early January to provide digital, analytics and SEO training to our members. This free of charge member benefit was welcomed by the businesses that attended, including Markerstudy Leisure, DMP and Trinity Theatre, and will be repeated in the near future to enable more local businesses to learn new skills.



September – Food Month in Tunbridge Wells

As farmers and vineyards harvest their crops, Tunbridge Wells is going to spend a month celebrating food. With Food Festival, Farmer's Markets, pop up events and a celebration of everything food related, there's a huge array of food related events to stimulate the taste buds!

Photo by @Boris & Bull



FOOD EVENTS

We worked with local businesses in September 2017 to promote food & beverage businesses locally. This became 'Food Month', a celebration of producers and suppliers with a strong emphasis on local. Basil held a quiche masterclass, Fuggles Beer Cafe held a pop up restaurant night on the Spa Valley Railway and ten other businesses held events, created special dishes or ran promotions. There were 2 food festivals in the town centre; the Harvest Food Festival in The Pantiles early in the month, and a Food Festival in Calverley Grounds at the end of the month. Around 17,000 visitors attended the Food Festival in late September, proving that there is enthusiasm for events.

These events will be repeated in 2018 with additional events, participants and promotions.

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

Small Business Saturday is an international movement, founded in San Francisco. It was created to promote the ethos of 'supporting local'. In the US, Small Business Saturday is concerned chiefly with retail business; we decided to support Small Business Saturday but went one step further, ensuring that our non-retail businesses were supported too.

Small Business Advice Event

Around 35 businesses attended our free business advice morning at One Warwick Park in early November. Experts from leading local businesses ifour, Cripps, Thomson Snell & Passmore and Natwest delivered presentations and took questions from start-ups and small businesses on themes including employment law, crowdfunding, finance and brand building.

Small Business Saturday pop ups

On Saturday 2nd December 2017, we organised 12 pop ups for small businesses in Ely Court and provided office space for Greg Clark, our local MP and Cabinet Minister for Business to hold his constituency surgery.

THE TUNBRIDGE WELLS CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Retailers account for around 45% of the businesses in Tunbridge Wells town centre. Christmas is a key time for retailers of all sizes and our Christmas Gift Guide was designed to promote a 'support local' message to West Kent and East Sussex residents. No fees were charged to participating businesses and they were encouraged to submit several gifts for inclusion. We made the guide as simple as possible for businesses to include themselves by organising photography and writing copy. The Gift Guide went live online in mid November and a total of 47 businesses participated. It was promoted heavily on social media platforms throughout November and December and was reproduced in both The Times of Tunbridge Wells and Index magazine, providing businesses with additional exposure.

Positive feedback was provided by several of the businesses who had listings within the guide, and we will look to repeat the Gift Guide in 2018.



‘TOGETHER’ AT CHRISTMAS

Remaining true to our ethos of working collaboratively with businesses, community and amenity groups in the town centre, we funded one of the star acts at the opening night of the ice rink in Calverley Grounds in November, the ice skating and opera singing Snow Queen proved to be immensely popular.



In December, the UK Gospel Choir was booked by Royal Tunbridge Wells Together to perform in the Town at The Pantiles Christmas Market and a second short set at One Warwick Park Hotel in Chapel Place. They attracted a crowd of watchers and thanks were extended by many traders in The Pantiles who expressed their pleasure at “the best entertainment ever”.

CHRISTMAS SHOP WINDOW COMPETITION

To engage with independent retailers of all sizes, we ran a Christmas Shop Window Competition which was judged in early December by a number of local schoolchildren. 19 businesses, mainly local independent retailers, entered the competition. Prizes of advertising and free Royal Tunbridge Wells Together membership were awarded to winning businesses.



TOURISM

People use their leisure time wisely and are rightly selective about the places they opt to visit. Our Spa Town heritage and stunning natural and built environment aren't necessarily enough to ensure a steady stream of visitors unless we regularly inform them of the attractions of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

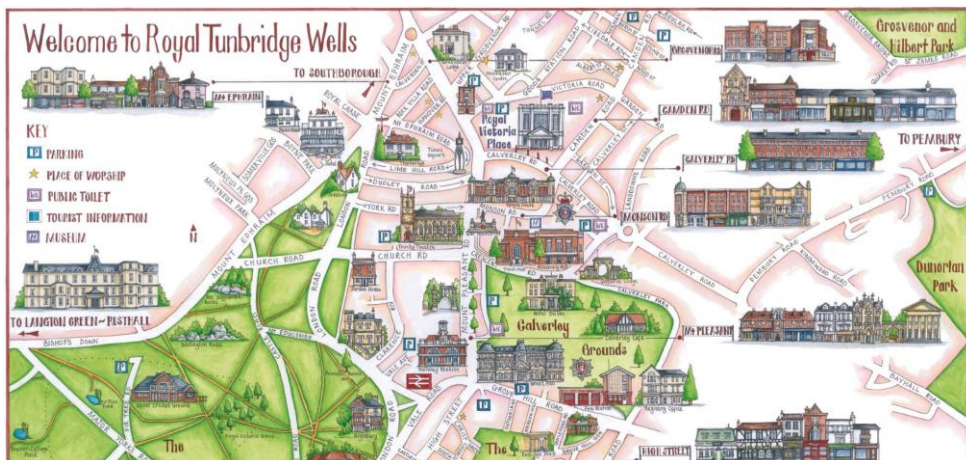
Royal Tunbridge Wells Together is working in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to ensure that memberships of Tourism South East and Visit Kent are maximised and that benefit is delivered for the good of the town.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together funded the purchase of a bespoke exhibition stand for use at all future tourism events and funded the space at Excursions, the tourism event at Alexandra Palace in January 2018. The stand was staffed by Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, Hotel du Vin, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and The Assembly Hall Theatre.



TOWN MAP

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together worked with well-known, local artist, Elaine Gill to create a stunning A2 town map. The map is hand drawn and coloured and features many buildings, open spaces and destinations across the town centre. Elaine's architectural work is incredibly detailed and very popular. We printed 20,000 of these maps and they are available, free of charge at many sites throughout the town centre area including the Tourist Information Office, the Railway Station, coffee shops, restaurants and theatres.



COMMUNICATIONS

As a membership organisation and Community Interest Company, we aim to always keep our costs and expenses to a minimum. We send our newsletters out by email to our growing database once a month, maintain our website with regular updates and utilise social media to communicate with our members and the wider public.

LOBBYING ON KEY ISSUES

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together has listened carefully to the concerns of businesses over issues such as relaxation of Permitted Development Rights, CCTV and Parking and lobbied locally and nationally on the issue. We attend council meetings to speak on behalf of local businesses and discuss these issues with Greg Clark our local MP and Cabinet Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.



CONTACT US

If you would like to get in touch with Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, please do by:

Email: karen@tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk, lauren@tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk

EK7 Ely Court
Royal Victoria Place
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 2SP



Tel: 01892 531985
www.tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk