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THE NEWTON

Crier

THE NEWSLETTER OF NEWTON ABBOT TOWN COUNCIL

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2021





EDITOR'S NOTES

Here comes
the sun! 

With the arrival of the summer months, and the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, things are really hotting up around the town! Public events are beginning to make a welcome return, new business ventures are being launched and our flagship museum and community hub can now be properly shared with visitors.

Here at the town council, we firmly believe that Newton's Place can play a vital role in galvanising Newton Abbot's amazing spirit of community whilst also attracting day-trippers and amateur historians from further afield – all of which is good news for both local residents and high street shops and traders alike.

On top of this, we've recently been granted 'plastic-free community' status, as recognised by long-term environmental campaigners Surfer's Against Sewage, making our town one of the cleanest and greenest in the South West.

The last couple of months has also seen a significant 'changing of the guard' at the museum, with our stalwart curator, Felicity Cole, hanging up her white gloves after an amazing 32 years in the history hot-seat.

Stepping up from her previous role as assistant to Felicity, Charlotte Dixon has now taken the reigns as our new curator, and we welcome Katie Petley-

Jones to the team as assistant to Charlotte. We're confident that our past has a bright future!

Sam

Samantha Scott, Deputy Town Clerk.

Keep in touch



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Newton's Place opens its doors to the public

NEWTON'S
PLACE
A COMMUNITY SPACE

THE £2.2 million Newton's Place museum and community hub in Newton Abbot has opened for business! Rooms can now be hired and free visits to the museum booked.

Residents wanting to talk with staff or members of the town council can also now make appointments for meetings inside the facility, which is housed in the former St Leonard's Church on Wolborough Street. The opening follows the government's easing of pandemic restrictions and means the public can finally enjoy the community asset they had long asked for.

A delighted project champion Cllr Mike Ryan said: *'We were able to open the museum for a short time last year but had to close soon after when the latest lockdown began. Now we're back in business and can't wait to welcome visitors to a facility we're truly proud of.'*

'The town council took ownership of a crumbling landmark building and has conserved it for future generations. We've also given it a new purpose, serving as a cultural hub for the town. The museum, to which entry is free, is simply spectacular and the rooms we have for hire – also normally free of charge if you're a charity or local group – are bright and welcoming.'

'We also have our council offices within Newton's Place making it easier for residents to meet with staff and councillors if they wish. We're not calling Newton's Place a town hall as it's so much more than that; it's the new heart of the town and we're thrilled that finally we can share this great place with the people of Newton Abbot and the many visitors we know will want to take a look.'

The project took five years to complete, longer than expected due to delays in the bid programme and then the Covid-19 crisis. It was assisted by a £950,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund plus awards and donations from a number of other sources. One bequest came from museum stalwart, the late Chrissie Ditchburn who has a room in the building named after her. The cost was covered by the town council without the need to increase its share of the precept.

Visit the website www.newtonspplace.org to book your visit, or contact the council for further information.

Museum curator retires after 32 years

Colleagues have bid a fond farewell to Newton Abbot Museum curator Felicity Cole, who has retired after more than 30 years in the job. A socially-distanced reception was held at Newton's Place, Wolborough Street, on Thursday June 10, the building now home to the collection Mrs Cole has cared for since the late 1980s.

Mayor Cllr Mike Joyce paid tribute to the dedication she had given the role and her part in overseeing the move from Devon Square last year. Expressing his delight in the new facility he said: *'This is the legacy you and others have given the town and we'll be always grateful to you for that. Thanks for everything you've done, and for all the*

years you put in at Devon Square, which was a little box compared to this. It's only through your guidance and enthusiasm that we've got what we have today.'

Deputy Mayor Cllr Carol Bunday echoed the sentiment and encouraged Mrs Cole to make the most of her time away from the nine-to-five. *'As a pensioner myself now, can I say enjoy your life and thank you for everything you've done,'* she said.

Happy Retirement

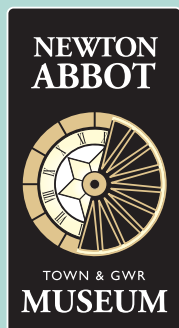
Mrs Cole was presented with flowers and gifts including a signed print of the Teign Estuary. A keen artist herself, Mrs Cole intends to paint as well as spending time with her family and enjoying walks with husband Martin.

She told colleagues: *'I consider myself to be an exceptionally lucky person because being able to wake up each morning and think "Yay, I'm going to work!" has been a great privilege. And of course, it's all been about the people who supported the museum over the years really. We started off with twelve volunteers, all dead keen, and were able to open three days a week.*

'Then it slowly grew up to 24 people, 42 people, 62 people – and they all have brought so much to the town, we're incredibly lucky, as every one of them has got such a skill to bring. And now we've got a bright new start, with new volunteers as well as the old ones, there's so much potential here.'



Mrs Cole with the mayor, Cllr Mike Joyce, just prior to cutting her magnificent fruit-covered cake (created by our very own deputy town clerk, Samantha Scott!)



Museum News

WITH **CHARLOTTE DIXON**, OUR BRAND NEW MUSEUM CURATOR!

This past year has certainly been a rollercoaster for us all! Following periods of lockdowns we were delighted to reopen the doors of Newton Abbot Museum on the 17th May and to welcome visitors in once again.

We have been overwhelmed by the positive comments of our visitors and we are now taking group bookings and hosting events, which is wonderful to see. To find out what's on at the museum, including our current temporary exhibition, visit our website – www.museum-newtonabbot.org.uk – and remember, entry is still free!

You commented – we listened!

We have comment cards available in the museum for your feedback, and we take the time to read each and every one. We are really thankful for your thoughts and suggestions and are delighted that so many of you have told us how much you enjoyed your visit to the museum.

We thought we'd take this opportunity to answer a few of your questions from the comment cards: we can't speak to you directly as all cards are anonymous (because we want you to be able to tell us the not-so-good things too if you need to), but we can use these pages to reach out and address your suggestions.



Where have ancient objects like the market charter been kept for the last 400 years?

We are very lucky to have the Market Charter dating from 1604 on display. The development of the market is such an important part of Newton Abbot's history. It would not be exaggerating to say that

the market is the reason we are here today as a town, but little is known about the story and location of the charter before it was donated to us by Teignbridge District Council in the 1990s.

Charters and deeds are fascinating to historians, not just for their factual contents, but for the objects themselves: the type of parchment, the inks used and even the hand in which they are written all give vital clues about their age. Ultimately, they are legal documents recording transactions, and often remained in the hands of the people and organisations involved – preserved for their practical use, not their historical significance.

Archivists note that most surviving charters record the transfer of rights relating to religious organisations because those institutions tended to be the most long-lived and likely to hold continuous archives. Given Newton Abbot's strong links to the monks of Torre Abbey, this could be the reason for our charter's survival.

Regarding our other objects: our touchscreens hold lots of additional information and, outside of the museum, we often share behind the scenes stories and extra facts on our Facebook and Twitter accounts.



Will there be a café?

We thought a lot about the addition of a café in Newton's Place and in the end it wasn't feasible for two main reasons:

- 1) We have lots of lovely locally owned cafés very near by and we aim to encourage visitors to enjoy Newton Abbot's facilities, not provide competition and take their customers.
- 2) The amount of space required for a kitchen to prepare refreshments suitable for public consumption was prohibitive as it would have had to have been quite large.

We do however have a seating area upstairs you can access via the stairs or lift where you can take a breather and enjoy a hot drink from the automated vending machine*. This area is decorated in the theme of Madge Mellor's, historically beloved local café, so every cup of tea comes with a side order of even more local history.

* for the very small charge of just £1!



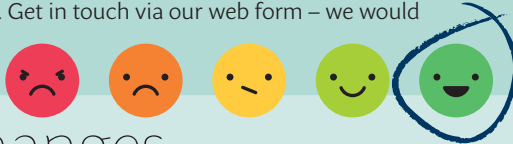
What about a quiet hour for sensitive people?

An excellent suggestion! We are now running regular relaxed visit times with our first on the 9th August. Relaxed visits are calmer and quieter than a usual day at the museum where we reduce the sounds and have a quiet space available to take a break in, ideal for anyone with sensory needs or autism. Keep an eye on our website and social media for upcoming relaxed visiting times.



Can I have a job here?

Well, the person who left this comment was seven years old, so we suggest you wait a few years! But if you have been inspired by your visit or want to get involved, we are always looking for new people to join our team of volunteers. Get in touch via our web form – we would love to hear from you.



Staff changes

After an incredible 32 years as the museum curator, Felicity Cole retired on the 10th June. Felicity has worked on so many wonderful projects over the years and truly transformed the museum, culminating in this fantastic new open space within the walls of a Victorian former church. The staff and volunteers at the museum have enjoyed working with Felicity immensely and her enthusiasm, energy and passion for the collections and the people never failed to shine through. We all wish Felicity a wonderful and well-deserved retirement.

Having worked as assistant to Felicity, it's now my responsibility as curator to safeguard not just the artefacts in the museum but also the amazing sense of community and friendly enthusiasm that defines Felicity's legacy here. Taking over my previous role as museum assistant, we are delighted to welcome Katie Petley-Jones (*pictured below*) to the team.



Katie comments: *'During this turbulent year I decided to take the plunge and go after a role within a museum where I could work with both objects and the local community, and I have been very lucky to join the team here as the museum assistant. Having been fortunate enough to work in different museums and heritage sites over the years I can bring these experiences to the role and contribute to the amazing work that has taken*

place in recent years. Following my relocation from my work in Bath, I am looking forward to exploring the area and getting stuck in with all the exciting upcoming projects that the museum has in store!'

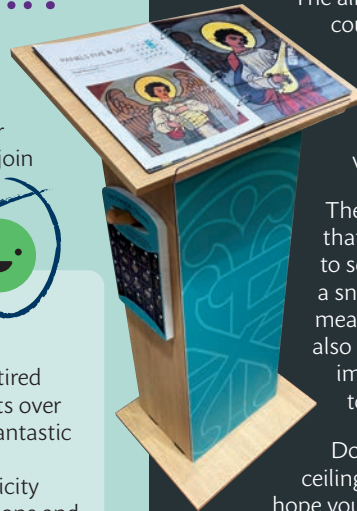
THINGS ARE (NOT) LOOKING UP!

Following a comment from a visitor about the difficulty of viewing the beautifully conserved chancel ceiling without getting a crick in the neck, we promptly got in touch with designers Lou Jones Design Ltd.

The aim was to devise something that could essentially bring the ceiling down to the visitors at ground level, and to enable more of the details of the beautiful 19th century painted ceiling to be visible to everyone.

The outcome is a flip-book installation that enables visitors to turn the pages to see details of each ceiling panel and a snippet of information about the meanings behind the imagery. There are also five portable boards featuring an image of the ceiling, making it visible to multiple visitors at any one time.

Do look out for the new chancel ceiling display next time you visit, we hope you enjoy it!



NEW DONATIONS

We have recently been given a 'fandoshi', or a loin cloth, the only garment worn by a local gentleman during his time as a prisoner of war (PoW) during World War II. Captured by a Japanese army in Singapore he was sent to Burma (now known as Myanmar) to work on the railway. As he had been training to become an architect he was employed in the camps drawing office working on plans for the railway and bridges. Had he been building them he may well have not lived to tell the tale.

In 1945, after four years in the prisoner of war camp, Mr Newcombe returned home where he continued to train as an architect and went on to have a successful career. The fandoshi, which he made out of a mosquito net, is a small reminder of some of the horrors that prisoners of war went through and the terrible conditions that were endured.

Inspired by Nature

WITH KATE GREEN, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER FOR NEWTON'S PLACE

A Summer Full of Colour

Inspired by the butterfly collection of Dr Henry Mapleton, the museum recently created a butterfly activity pack to post out to local people in the spring months.

The packs contained insect-friendly plant seeds to encourage wildlife gardening plus lots of art materials for everyone to create their own winged wonders. The museum then displayed the butterfly creations that were sent in – like the ones pictured below – alongside some of Dr Mapleton's butterflies, in the community area.

Dr Mapleton, a public health campaigner who, in the early 1900s, was instrumental in improving sewers and sanitation – helping to rid the town of cholera and diphtheria – was also a very keen lepidopterist and the museum has a couple of beautiful cabinets containing butterflies and moths that he gathered.

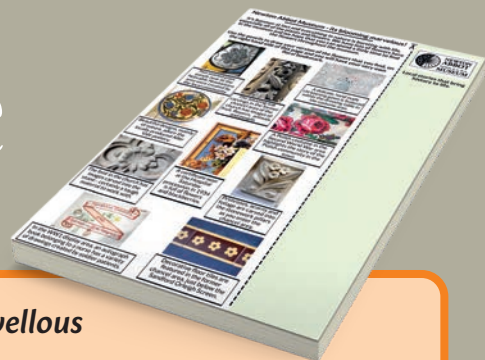
One lovely surprise was that children at Wolborough School contacted us and said that the whole school were going to make some butterflies! In return we have given them some pots and butterfly-friendly seeds to plant in their playground.

Examples of the wonderfully colourful creatures created with materials from the activity packs

Bloomin' Marvellous

Newton Abbot Museum is bloomin' marvellous!! It's summer at last and everything in nature is bursting with life, especially the plants and flowers. There are lots of representations of flowers amongst the museum artefacts and within the beautiful building too – embroidered, carved, etched, chiselled, and painted.

If you are planning a visit soon, look out for our special summer activity sheet (pictured above) that highlights where different flowers are located inside the building and invites you to draw them to make your own floral bookmark.



If you have an idea or story to share please email me – kate.green@newtonspplace.org



A rare chance for the public to see how the former St Leonard's Church was transformed into the fabulous Newton's Place is now available at the building itself.

Images taken across two years by Newton Abbot Photographic Club will form an insightful exhibition into the building work undertaken between 2018 and 2020.

The exhibition is being held in the magnificent community rooms, upstairs in Newton's Place from Saturday 7th August to Thursday 2nd September – and entry is free.

A dedicated team of photographers from the club visited the building site each month to capture the work and the changes that were happening to the building, including adding a first floor, digging a lift shaft, installing the suspended railway track, restoring the stonework and painted ceiling in the chancel area, as well as the installation of the museum cases and historical objects.

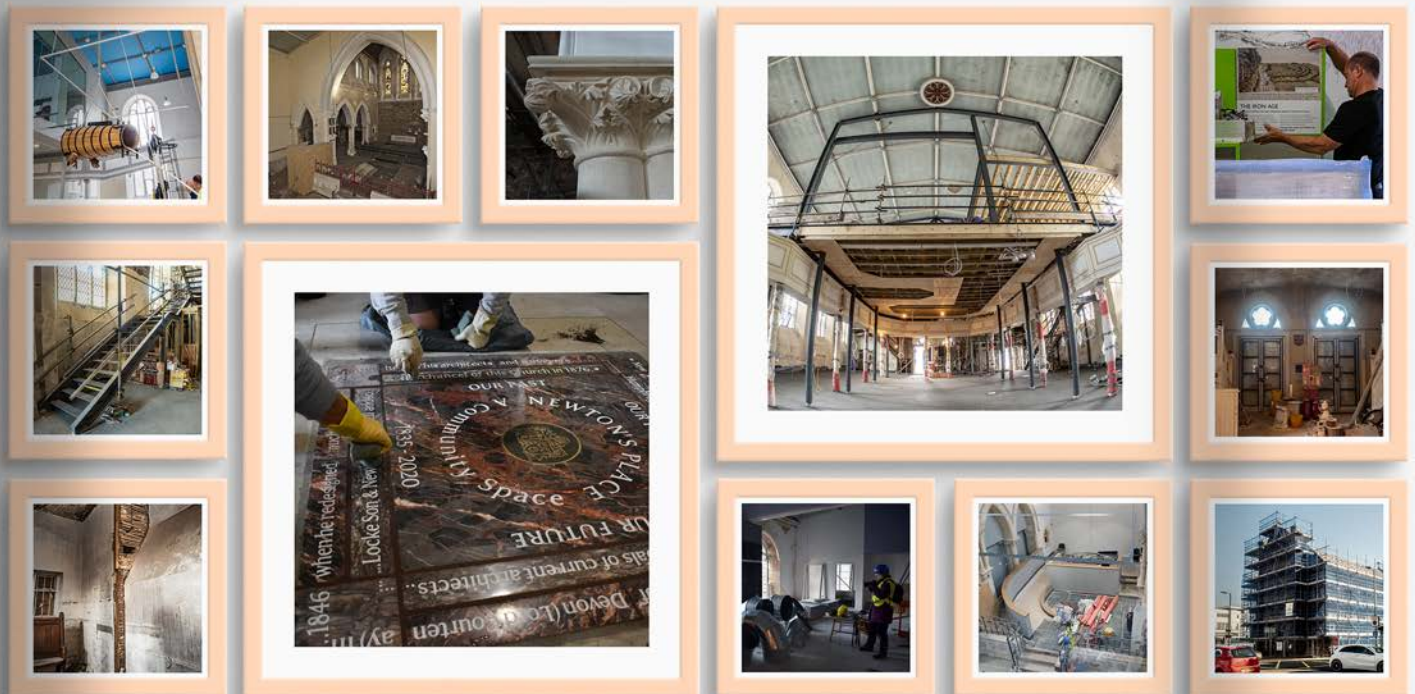
The exhibition of photographic panels will showcase the changes chronologically, giving visitors a 'before', 'during' and 'after' view of all parts of the building from the basement to the attic. There are some views captured that will never be seen again.

'If you stand in the former chancel area and look back towards the front of the building you can see the upstairs community room with its huge glass wall. But I have taken photos on that spot from before the building work starting, when you could see right through to the large, stained glass windows at the front of the building. Nobody will ever see that view again now!' said Lynn Buckley, photography club member.

Kate Green, community engagement officer said:

'All of the photographers were excited to be taking photographs on site each month and they had to wear hard hats and safety boots, but that didn't put them off – they just kept coming back and got on with it.'

'Members of the group have captured some beautiful photos and I am very excited to be able to share them with everyone.'





Out & About

with **Sally Henley**, TOWN DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

I am writing this for our town council newsletter at the end of June and I hope that when you read this, we will be revelling in a return to 'normality', after we have all been double jabbed! It has certainly been a very long haul for those who do business in town centres and there has never been a more challenging time. All of the different sectors, from cafés to barbers, from hairdressers to publicans and from retailers to accountants; each has been stretched in ways that would have seemed inconceivable just 18 months ago.

Newton Abbot businesses have one thing very much in common though; they have all bent over backwards to keep their business going – through innovation, determination, and sheer hard work. I've been amazed at the resourcefulness and the ingenuity of the business community, who throughout everything had one focus – to get back to providing great products and great service to their loyal customers.

It was however, with such sadness that we saw the closure of Edinburgh Woollen Mill, so long a high street stalwart, but at the same time, after what seemed an uncertain future, we rejoice in the fact that we have retained Peacocks and Bonmarché, two more of our valued ladies' brands. The Mayor Cllr Mike Joyce and I were delighted to do a spot of ribbon cutting at two new independent businesses in the spring. In Queen Street, Shaldon Bakery (pictured right) has been a huge success, as has The Race Lounge – both businesses having created employment and refurbished once tired and dilapidated properties. We also welcomed Scott Richards, a local firm of solicitors who have made such a fantastic job of another, once shabby, old premises in Albany Street. CEX opened in the late spring with its entertainment exchange franchise in Courtenay Street, providing a successful niche business for the town, and I am sure by now a couple of other planned restaurants will be open. Great too, to see two of our independent cafés around the clock tower in expert and enthusiastic new hands!

There is no shortage of people hoping to do business in Newton Abbot and, certainly at the time of writing, there are at least four

that I know of actively seeking the right premises. I had a few days 'up north' in June and was shocked to see how the lockdowns had affected other towns and cities. It was particularly sad to see boarded-up House of Fraser and Debenhams stores, with some cities having a double whammy, leaving them with no department store at all and some pretty enormous vacant sites in prominent locations. It is for this reason that I celebrate the continued presence after nearly a century, of our own independent department store, Austins, which continues to thrive with the support of both regular and new shoppers, who know that if we want to see our town centres thrive, it is vital that we 'shop locally' and in person.

It was both surprising and disappointing to learn that Barclays Bank would be closing its only Teignbridge branch. It was equally good however, to hear of HSBC's continued commitment to its premises and to its customers in Newton Abbot. Hopefully, the many banks and building societies which are part of the town centre business community will recognise the importance of having a continued Newton Abbot presence as a service to all Teignbridge residents and visitors.

Whilst the uncertainty of the government's strategy may have hindered our ability to put on our usual events in the town centre this summer, Newton's Place has been providing wonderful opportunities for people to learn

about our town's rich history. There is nothing dry and dusty about our fantastic museum and it is a great way to spend a couple of hours or more. Newton Abbot Art Group are amongst those local groups that have taken advantage of the fantastic flexible space, which is available to local people, and I can't wait to see more groups taking advantage of this magnificent asset in the near future.

I look forward to seeing you in town!

Sally Henley
Town Development Manager



Mayor Cllr Mike Joyce having fun at The Race Lounge





RY



SHALDON BAKERY

The Surfin Bakers

IN
NEWTON
ABBOT

BREAD | BUNS | PASTIES | SANDWICHES | FRESH COFFEE

01626 906559

ALOHA

HELLO

Ho!o

HEY

Staff members at Shaldon Bakery, with Sally Henley and Mayor Cllr Mike Joyce



SUMMER EVENTS DIARY

NEWTON Abbot Town Council is looking forward to staging more events as lockdown restrictions ease. Many of the annual events loved by residents and visitors have not been held for more than a year owing to the pandemic.

But now, with the Covid crisis finally coming under control, Cllr Carol Bunday, who is Chairman of the council's Events Sub Committee, is looking forward to better times ahead:

'Newton Abbot usually has a packed events calendar, something we're very proud of. The town council is responsible for organising many of the activities, or at least is often behind the scenes working with groups and charities to help make them happen.'

'It's been a matter of great sadness that we haven't been able to get as involved as much as we would like but I'm sure people will appreciate the problems we've been experiencing.'

'Now, as we appear to be moving into a new era in which the pandemic restrictions will be easing, it will be good to start adding dates to our social calendar and once more making Newton Abbot the vibrant town we know and love.'

The council has issued advice to groups and charities wanting help with their events. Organisations will need their own public liability insurance – worth at least £10 million – if activities are to be staged on land owned by Teignbridge District Council, such as Market Walk.

The town council's insurance only covers its own activities and exceptions cannot be made. Until lockdown restrictions are eased, the town council cannot encourage events that may cause social distancing problems. Given the small size of the council's events team, the amount of assistance it can offer might be limited.

'The town council is delighted to work with organisations whenever possible but please bear in mind that our resources are limited,' said Cllr Bunday (pictured, right).

'We're always happy to advise however, so do feel free to get in touch. Either call us on 01626 201120 or email info@newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk To check on the latest events programme, visit www.newtonabbot-tc.gov.uk.'



TOWN CRIERS COMPETITION

Saturday 11th September

St Leonard's Clock Tower | 10.15am – 2pm

Town criers from far and wide will be back again to compete in the competition. To really pump up the volume, there will be a new category this year, entitled **Extra Loudest Cry!**

SPONSORED BY: Ashfords Fruit & Veg, Austins Department Store and Lord of the Borough
Keith Stokes-Smith



LORD OF THE BOROUGH
Keith Stokes-Smith



SPECTRUM MUSIC CONCERT WIND BAND

Sunday 12th September

Courtenay Park Bandstand | 2.30pm

To maintain Covid-19 regulations we would kindly request that those wishing to attend concerts please bring their own chairs.

SPONSORED BY: Charles Royle and Company



MOOR OTTERS ARTS TRAIL 2021

Running until Monday 20th September

Various locations around the town

Of the 81 stunning sculptures of otters with cubs, designed and decorated by local and national artists, six are now on show around the town.

At the end of the summer 'otter-spotters' as well as art collectors and individuals, will have the opportunity to give their favourite otter a new home when they are auctioned to raise funds for vital conservation and access projects in the National Park.

SPONSORED BY: Dartmoor National Park and South West Water





FREE OTTER SPOTTER PASSPORTS
are available now at Newton's Place,
so grab one today and join in the fun!



ARTS TRAIL 2021

Town bags SAS 'plastic-free' award!

Newton Abbot has been awarded Plastic-Free Community status by the Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) marine conservation charity. The recognition comes after almost two years of hard work to reduce dependency on single-use plastics in the town.

The campaign was started by Plastic-Free Newton Abbot (PFNA) in June 2019 with the support of town development manager Sally Henley and Ben Bryant of Community Action Devon.

The team signed up to the SAS Plastic-Free Communities five-point plan, which involved pulling together key organisations, initiating a community-led steering group

and rolling out the SAS Plastic-Free schools education programme.

One of the coordinators, Helen Chessum said: *'Hooray! So pleased to announce we have now got the full Surfers Against Sewage accreditation for our work around reducing plastics.'*

'We now are on the SAS map as an official Plastic-Free Community and join over 700 other towns around the UK.'

'Local businesses were already on a mission to find alternatives to damaging throw-away plastics. We simply needed to acknowledge on-going efforts and support them in the next phase of the challenge.'



Town development manager Sally Henley, town clerk Phil Rowe, Helen Chessum and Mayor Cllr Mike Joyce as the award was announced



Pictured during one of the litter picks are (l-r) Sarah Hayes, Irene Matl, Cllr Jackie Hook, Jiri Matl (at the back) PFNA Lead Betina Winkler, Brian Hayes and Peter Beale.

The initiative included litter picks on land and water, information stalls in the town centre, talks to organisations, film screenings, joining University Technical College students in a plastics initiative and mass 'unwrap' events at supermarkets.

Westcountry-based author Ellie Jackson visited primary schools to share her children's book *Duffy's Lucky Escape*, a

story about a turtle who swallowed plastic rubbish that had been thrown into the sea.

'We are simply over the moon to receive this award on behalf of the town,' said Helen.

'It recognises the strength of feeling and work being done in Newton Abbot to stem the vast tide of single-use plastics.'



Helping to spread the word

One of Newton Abbot's Plastic-Free Business Champions, Sue Morrish of Glebe Cottage Cards, said: *'We've always had a passion for the environment and much of our inspiration is quite literally drawn from nature.'*

We are offering card buyers positive environmental choices because we think they have a really exciting role to play in encouraging a greener card industry. Naturally there have to be green products in the marketplace before consumers can make green choices and that is the choice that we wanted to make possible.

We are not experts on green issues, and we know we are not perfect, so we are always looking for ways to minimise our environmental impact and that's one of the reasons we were so excited when we heard about the vision for Plastic Free Newton Abbot.'

Some of the green initiatives undertaken by Glebe Cottage include:

- ◆ Re-using old boxes, packaging and envelopes
- ◆ Using tissue paper and compostable chippings made from corn
- ◆ Removing all individual bags from single cards when sending orders out
- ◆ Use of compostable bags for Christmas card packs and calendars
- ◆ Replacing plastic tape with paper tape and cutting back on sticky labels with plastic-lined backing paper
- ◆ Using refills from Newton Abbot company Cressicks Eco-supplies.

Many thanks to our local businesses who made valuable contributions to the campaign:



Indulgence Tea Rooms



Coffee#1



Investing in our Future

No Limits Café Kitchen & Hub is an innovative and inclusive café where young where people with additional needs learn new skills, gain work experience and are supported in their transition to work and a more independent adult life.

A not-for-profit Community Interest Company, No Limits is a bustling, 'real life' café and kitchen that is open to the public to encourage engagement with the community.

If you pop in and grab a table from Monday to Friday you will immediately notice the relaxed and friendly vibe of the team, with job coaches supporting the work experience members. No Limits' aim is to break down barriers in society. Its menu includes food cooked to order using locally sourced ingredients from suppliers such as Newton Abbot's Baker the Butchers, Ashford's Fruit & Veg and The Coffee Company.

After successfully receiving funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, No Limits finally opened its doors at the end of June 2020 and, despite the national lockdowns, has already engaged with a number of young people and adults with varying additional needs, as well as building up a loyal customer base.

Offering work experience, supported internships and supported employment, their programmes cover a wide range of hospitality skills including front of house, barista, customer service, kitchen work, catering, working as a team and managing time.

Proud to have been awarded Autism Friendly and Makaton Friendly status, as well as becoming Disability Confident Leaders, No Limits offers a 'total communication' environment with symbol and sign menus, as well as Braille. Customers are welcomed by staff that are Makaton Level 2 trained and Autism Aware and their aim is for Newton Abbot to become a Makaton and Autism friendly town!

With a well-being ethos, several of the No Limits team are now mental health first aiders and can signpost people to relevant support. No Limits are also a Rees affiliated café, meaning care experienced people can benefit from free drinks and half price food with the use of a Rees Guest Card.

No limits is continually fundraising and seeking sponsors to provide even more work experience opportunities for people with disabilities. All profits from the café go back into No Limits projects, so buy a coffee and cake, sit, and watch the world go by while supporting a fantastic project!



Working Together Will See Us Through

COUNCILLOR COLIN PARKER REFLECTS ON A YEAR WE'LL NEVER FORGET...



What a year we have had. The Covid 19 Pandemic has affected us all in different ways.

We have been locked down, restricted in our movements and prevented from seeing loved ones. Our children have lost invaluable learning time, through not having been able to attend school or their parents lacking the resources to effect adequate learning facilities at home.

We reflect on and think of those who have had the illness and recovered, those who are still suffering, and it is with great sadness that I know all of us have the deepest heartfelt sympathies to those who have suffered the extreme pain of losing someone.

The above concerns and sentiments of course take precedence over everything else. It seems rather crass, but it is necessary to the talk about our communities, our cities, our towns and villages and how they have been – and continue to be – affected detrimentally by the ravaging effects of this virus from a business point of view. The virus has affected the vitality of our town of Newton Abbot, and yes, there are deeply personal stories linked with trading failures, closures, and many other issues.

Of course, we are not alone, and we must look forward to a time when we can return our town to the vibrancy it held prior to the pandemic. In my opinion town centres and the high streets are still needed. Nothing beats the atmosphere of a busy trading town with shopping and socialising at its heart.

I must talk at this time about our two local councils, Newton Abbot Town Council and Teignbridge District Council. The distribution and administering of grants by both has been exceptional. As a member of both; (Chair of town council's *Finance & Audit* and *Strategy* committees for the last six years and current Chair of Teignbridge District Council) it is with a degree of optimism that I see our two councils working together now and also in the future to support our town and do everything they can to help us emerge from this pandemic in the future.

More and more council tiers are realising the added importance of working together to provide and maintain the essential services needed for the communities we serve. This need has never been greater. Devolution is not new but is continuing across the country. The smooth cooperation between councils and the wider community groups and charitable organisations, especially here in Newton Abbot and Teignbridge, must continue and improve.

Engaging with residents, listening to their concerns, being respectful of their needs and helping where possible are things that councillors and community group leaders should have foremost in their minds. I know they are at the top of my list, along with respecting each other.

All of us must be really appreciative of those people putting themselves before all others during this time of national crisis. These include not only NHS staff, carers and essential workers but also the volunteers providing food parcels, cooked meals and anyone who has helped a friend or neighbour in need. More recently, the vaccination centres have been performing an incredibly crucial role in an effective and efficient manner. I am sure there are many others who deserve a great big thank you and well done – probably too many to mention.

I know these sentiments are shared by us all, including my fellow councillors and the staff of both Newton Abbot Town Council and Teignbridge District Council.

To close, just to say we must follow the rules to continue our road out of this unprecedented era and work together to ensure that our town and the surrounding regions emerge from the gloom into an even brighter, more prosperous and, most importantly, healthy future. Good Luck everyone and stay safe.

Cllr Colin Parker



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