

## **Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade Chairman's Report - 2023**

Welcome to the first Chair's Report for a while. It has been an interesting few years for The Chamber. Here is a summary of events and Chamber activities since the last report:

- Jonathon Brook from Westmorland & Furness District Council gave us an informative presentation at The Ship November 2022.
- Change of venue for Chamber meetings from September 2023 from The Ship Inn to The Ro.
- Andrew Smith (LDNPA) was the guest speaker for the October 2023 meeting on Planning procedures and issues.
- Richard Moor (Temple Heelis) was the guest speaker for the November 2023 meeting. Unfortunately, due to a poor turnout, the talk did not go ahead.
- The Secretary represented the Chamber at the Windermere & Bowness Town Council's highly successful 'Community Drop-In' event at the Belsfield in November.
- The Secretary presented the Chamber's Trophy to The Elleray for 'best business tubs and baskets' at the Windermere In Bloom Award Ceremony in October.
- The Chamber has been active for another 12 months within the following:
  - Lake District Business Task Force
  - Lakes Line Rail User Group
  - Windermere-Diessen Twinning Association
  - Winter Lights, which will unfortunately be defunct after this year!
- The Chamber receives updates from the following people, organisations and groups and circulates information of interest to it's members:
  - Westmorland & Furness District Council
  - Windermere & Bowness Town Council
  - Tim Farron, MP
  - The rail companies - Avanti, TransPennine Express and Northern Rail
  - The police
  - Cumbria Chamber of Commerce
  - Neighbourhood Alert (old Neighbourhood Watch)
  - All Points North
  - National Highways
  - Transport for the North

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- Along with the Town Council, The Chamber judges the 'Christmas Window' Dressing Competition. Brackens of Bowness was this year's deserved winner. The trophy was presented by The Chair in January 2024 at the shop.
- The Chamber is currently undertaking a survey regarding the impact of the second day at the Glebe Market has had / is having on the local economy.

We are aware that the turnout to the formal face to face monthly meetings has dwindled in the years since Covid. To counter this, the committee has tried a different format this season with a guest speaker arranged for each of the meetings to try and encourage more members to attend. This has unfortunately not had the desired effect. Life for us all is hectic and running a business is highly demanding of our time. Time in the evenings is precious and we certainly understand that. Looking to the future, the Chamber's council are keen to understand how we can best serve and represent our members.

One member's recent kind comment captured what we think is one of the most important roles The Chamber plays; 'Thank you for all your hard work over the last year. I may rarely attend meetings but I always read all your emails with great interest and contribute to surveys and consultations wherever appropriate. Without your lead and dedication I am sure we would not achieve half of what we do'. With this in mind, we propose that for the forthcoming season the committee shall meet informally every 1-2 months in person. We shall circulate the date and venue in advance and any members wishing to join are more than welcome. During these meetings we are keen to explore how we can further help our members, by way of information dissemination, surveys, etc. In doing so, we can prioritise our time and effort engaging with our members distantly rather than in person. We welcome your thoughts and ideas.

We look forward to an exciting 2024 and wish you all success in your business endeavours in the coming season.

Best wishes,

Alex Kirby

Chair, Windermere & Bowness Chamber of Trade