

Minehead BID and Free Press join in local economy support initiative

Minehead traders beating lockdown

IT may not be business as usual for Minehead traders at the moment – but they are doing their best to keep all their customers happy.

Dozens of them have found ways of working through the lockdown, from switching to online trading to offering home deliveries for food and drink.

Among them is butcher Stuart Lowen who is working flat out delivering meat, vegetables and other essentials to homes in Minehead and surrounding villages – one of a dozen independent food sector traders, including fish and chip shops, kebab houses, Indian and Italian restaurants, which have rapidly adapted to vastly changed conditions.

Other traders are providing online shopping, delivery and collection services. And all have won the backing of the Minehead BID team, which is teaming up with the Free Press to offer a weekly Lockdown Directory of those still actively trading, together with their contact details.

Minehead BID manager Andrew Hopkins said traders had made a tremendous effort not to let their customers down during unprecedentedly challenging times.

mineheadbid

"In many cases it has been a very steep learning curve to adjust from having customers coming through the door to dealing with them remotely over the 'net' or telephone," he said.

"But I'm hugely impressed by the way so many of them have made that change so determinedly.

"After the initial challenges, things are on a much more even keel now and I know from the feedback we are getting that local people really

do appreciate the efforts Minehead businesses are making to make life as tolerable as it can be during lockdown."

The Minehead BID consortium was set up in 2018 with the support of more than 240 local traders to raise the town's profile as a resort and organise regular entertainment events – though this year's programme has been severely restricted by the coronavirus crisis.

But, said Andrew: "We could hardly have anticipated two years ago that BID would be playing another role altogether in co-ordinating local traders' response to a national pandemic.

"The plus side of this situation – as is the case across the country – is that thousands of families are really appreciating what local traders are doing to keep life on as normal a course as possible.

"And if that leads to those traders retaining a new and loyal customer base into the months and years after restrictions are lifted, then a virus which has sown such devastation will at least have had one positive outcome."

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