

Christmas Shopping Crawl 2012

Project Report

12 February 2013

The Shopping Crawl concept was tried and tested in the US before being introduced to the UK in 2012 by Clare Rayner, Retail Champion www.retailchampion.co.uk. A tool kit and guidance was provided on line and via webinars for adaptation by over 50 towns across the UK. Participating businesses were also given a free listing on <http://www.independentshops.co.uk> so 30 Buxton shops are now on this national directory.

The aims of the project as defined by the Project Proposal were 'To support independent businesses in Buxton by:

1. Introducing potential new customers to their stores
2. Specific publicity by advertising their names and locations
3. General publicity about why independent stores are good for the local economy
4. Start to stimulate environment for introduction of shop local loyalty scheme

Additional Objectives:

- Promote collaborative working amongst town centre businesses
- Demonstrate Town Team value / impact / intentions
- Fun

Project Team / Activation Partners: Neil M. Scowcroft and Jean Ball with support from a range of Town Team and local business members including Freshspark Creative, Nina Lubman, HPBC, participating shops, Hotline Signs, Vision Buxton and the University of Derby.

Crawl Maps – 5000 A4 folded to A5 maps were printed and distributed through out the town. The map was also available to download from www.visitbuxton.co.uk and www.buxtontownteam.co.uk. We know there were 56 hits on the map on the Visit Buxton site and there were approx 700 printed maps left over at the end. We don't know how many hits or downloads there were on the Town Team website.

Posters – 60 A4 Posters were displayed in participating shops and other venues around the town plus 4 large A0 posters which were displayed in the windows of vacant shops. Nina Lubman, commercial estate agent with access to the vacant shops moved the posters around as units filled and emptied.

Banner – a vinyl banner was produced by Hotline signs and displayed on the Pavilion Gardens railings throughout the Crawl period with thanks to Paul Armstrong and Alistair Spencer at HPBC for facilitating this. Neil Scowcroft now has the banner in storage for potential use again another year.

Promotion and Press Coverage – A series of 4 press releases were issued on 9, 13 and 30 November and 24 January. These resulted in articles and photos in the Buxton Advertiser on 25

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October (tagged onto piece about Town Team Partners £10K), 15 and 22 November, and 31 January and a full page article in Pure Buxton Winter 2012 edition published in November. In addition 2 interviews were recorded with High Peak Radio which were aired on multiple occasions. On 23 November the Buxton Sparkles Christmas Switch-on event was used as a key opportunity to engage local consumers to participate in the Crawl. Close to 1000 maps were handed out by a team of 6 Buxton Town Team volunteers and Bill Weston MBE encouraged interest within his MC chatter.

The University of Derby also publicised the Crawl internally via their intranet and in house radio station and the Festival Fringe mentioned it in 2 of their e-mailings.

Buxton's Crawl also featured as a guest blog on the national website.

Participating businesses were encouraged to promote the crawl, although not many did more than make it available in their shop. Jean and Neil tweeted and re-tweeted throughout the Crawl period to stimulate interest and keep the businesses engaged.

Derbyshire Life magazine covered the Prize Draw event and a piece will appear in their next issue. Lots of great photos were taken at the Prize Presentation, many of which have since appeared on Facebook, plus of course the one in The Advertiser. Others will find their way onto the Buxton Town Team and Vision Buxton websites.

And last but not least, the first prize winner's letter of thanks, listing all the businesses on the Crawl was published in the Buxton Advertiser the week following the Prize Presentation

Finances – The Buxton Town Team underwrote the project, but at the end of the day no Town Team money was actually spent. HPBC paid for the printing of the maps and Vision Buxton contributed £250 to cover the cost of the big A0 posters, banner and a small display ad in Pure Buxton. The purchased items were provided at heavily discounted prices to support the project and a great deal was done for free including the graphic design and project management. Each of the 30 participating businesses on the Crawl contributed a minimum of £40 to create the prize pot of £1,000 and £200 in cash and vouchers for the first and second prizes, and the University of Derby contributed a £100 voucher to spend at The Dome restaurant for the third prize.

The University also provided the food and drink including staff for the Prize Draw event at the Green man Gallery on 24 January. The tutor who came with the students said it had been an excellent experience for them to step out of their comfort zone into a new environment and they got lots of positive feedback.

Prize Draw & Presentation – The three winners were drawn at the Town Team Directors meeting on 14 January in front of half a dozen witnesses. A back up set of three were also drawn in case any of the others proved difficult to contact, however these were not required. Jean Ball contacted the three winners by phone, informed them they had won and invited them to the Prize Presentation event at the Green Man on 24 January where they would learn which prize they had won and collect it in front of the cameras. All three were thrilled, attended the prize event, and indicated they had genuinely enjoyed the crawl and discovered businesses they had previously been unaware of. The winners were:

- 1st prize £1000 – Joanne Hibbert, Gretton Rd, Buxton
- 2nd prize £200 – Claire Stamp, Eccles Road, Chapel-en-le-Frith
- 3rd prize £100 – Pauline McGowan, Mill Cliff, Buxton

All three winners gave permission for their names and photos to be used by Buxton Town Team and the local press, and for the Town Team to contact them about future initiatives and events.

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After receiving an email with some photos from the presentation Joanna, the first prize winner send a reply saying:

Thank you very much for the email and the hospitality last night. A superb venue and the drink and eats were lovely. I felt really pampered all evening. I have already had a light lunch at Presto with my daughter and treated myself and my daughter with some of the vouchers. The cash is also most useful as it means I can spend more than the voucher if necessary. I feel so privileged to win such a wonderful prize. Would you also convey my most sincere thanks to all the shops and the host venue and wish them every success for many years to come. A truly one off and magical experience.

THANK YOU

Joanne

The presentation event was very well attended by the participating businesses, supporting partners and Town Team members, at least one HPBC Councillor, as well as Derbyshire Life magazine and the photographer from the Buxton Advertiser. The presentation was done by Colin Sykes of BBC North West Tonight who graciously read an uplifting script and posed for photos with the winners. The evening also served as a launch for Town Team Membership, announcement of the Spring Fair, a networking event, valuable work experience for the catering students, and a showcase for the Green Man Gallery.

Consumer Data – The name and address panel on the Crawl forms included a tick box if the individual did NOT want their contact information retained by the Town Team and shared with the participating businesses. Neil has put the 20 or so addresses that were happy for their information to be retained / shared on a small spreadsheet which will be provided to the businesses and held for potential future use by / for the Town Team. This has been done under Buxton Spa Aromatics which is registered under Data Protection regulations, as the new Town Team is not. The first use of these contacts by the Town Team might be an email to promote the forthcoming Spring Fair.

Results

28 completed Crawl maps were received by the 6 January deadline (12th night). We have evidence of at least 120 people participating in the Crawl without completing it, but many more may have started. Anecdotally we heard that many intended to or started but did not complete what was in truth quite a big task to qualify for the prize draw.

Project Aims

Introducing potential new customers to their stores - An average of 68% of 'crawlers' were new to the businesses they visited and 22% bought something while they were there.

Specific publicity by advertising their names and locations – Each business was listed twice on 5000 maps, supported by posters in their windows and general publicity. Each business was also names in a letter published in the Buxton Advertiser the week following the Prize Presentation.

General publicity about why independent stores are good for the local economy – The press releases and resulting articles and radio interviews all highlighted the impact of local spending, as did the invitation to and the speech given at the Prize Presentation.

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Start to stimulate environment for introduction of shop local loyalty scheme - interest for a Shop Local Loyalty Scheme will only be proven when a scheme is launched after Easter. However, the feedback from the participating businesses and 'crawlers' indicates an appetite for more initiatives to support local trading activity.

Additional Objectives:

Promote collaborative working amongst town centre businesses - The Crawl and the publicity surrounding it tangibly demonstrated the value of collaborative working amongst town centre businesses. A Feedback questionnaire was given to each participating business at the close of play and 15 were received back – see attached spreadsheet for details. 11 said it was definitely worthwhile, 2 were undecided and 2 said no.

Demonstrate Town Team value / impact / intentions - Five businesses want to join the Buxton Town Team following the successful project. The project also helped to launch and establish a positive profile for the new Buxton Town Team, its values and intentions and to establish team working practices.

Fun – definitely succeeded on this one, the 'crawlers' and everyone who attended the prize presentation all reported how much they enjoyed it, as did the organisers.

Success Criteria

In the Project Proposal Form we set three measures of success:

At least 25 participating businesses – 30 achieved

Good local press and social media coverage - achieved

More than 50 completed entries – only 28 completed entries

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for the Future

- Set a lower achievement level to qualify for the prizes
- Lay the map out differently so that there is room for full 'how to' instructions
- The businesses who proactively promoted the Crawl to their customers got most out of it
- Longer promotion period needed prior to launch
- Get students involved in social media promotion
- Two people leading the project with a supportive team as required was ideal
- Local suppliers were very willing to support the local economy with discounts and freebies
- £1,000 is a big motivator
- Even on a snowy evening Buxton folks will turn out in support (both Switch-on and Prize Presentation)