

## **PROJECT CLOSING REPORT – Talking Signposts 2016**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

Provide informed members of the Town Team and other volunteers at one or two strategic points in the town to direct visitors to places of interest and to provide other local information.

### **2. DETAIL OF WHAT TOOK PLACE AND PROJECT SUMMARY**

The 'Talking Signposts' were deployed through July and August, whenever there were volunteers available. They covered up to 4 hours a day, working two hour shifts. The primary location was near the Turner Memorial, but if more than one volunteer was available the second could meet trains at the station, or be located in a different place.

Volunteers were recruited from the members of Buxton Town Team, from those who took part last year and via contacts with other voluntary organisations. They were briefed in advance and provided with relevant information, maps, guides, programmes and so on. They were provided with Town Team 'branding' and clearly identified as being there to give tourist information.

This year only 13 volunteers used Doodle Poll to sign up for a signposting shift, and the project closed with a total of 36 covered shifts. A comparison with other closing reports reveals that this year can be marked as the worst year since the project kicked-off in 2013. Trying to raise the profile by placing an article in the Advertiser (by John Phillips), writing to the U3A and an email sent out across all Town Team members while the project was running did not result in any more volunteers. A request for a Facebook-post was never answered.

With the project running, one volunteer made a comment about the hi-vis tabards and the clipboard. They were labelled as "too aggressive". The visitors clearly had no problem with any of the 'branding', but an alternative (cotton) tabard was provided. The volunteers were asked to collect visitor information but this clipboard containing the visitor information was lost during one of the shifts, so the data listed below is incomplete.

The volunteers recorded the places where visitors came from, and within the UK they were from: Leek, Cumbria, Cambridge, Elton, Norfolk, Stockport, Essex, Kent, Colchester, Hertfordshire, Belfast, Twickenham, Stalybridge, Leicester, Poynton, Whaley Bridge, Chichester, Dorset, Birmingham, Morecambe, Chapel, Gloucester, London, Stoke, Derby, Liverpool, Essex, Leeds, Wales, Rotherham, Glossop and Rochdale.

Places outside the UK were: Australia, Thailand, Italy, Beijing China, Spain, Washington USA, Hong Kong, Lithuania, Poland and Germany.

The volunteers were asked questions including the usual directions to bus stations, nearby toilets, places to eat (gluten free), the museum, cafes that accept dogs and child-friendly pubs.

They also asked: "Is Turner memorial ever going to have a working water fountain?" and "Can we afford to stay when the Crescent is finished?" Even a local resident looking for a job questioned a volunteer about opportunities.

Other comments from visitors included:

"There's a traffic build-up on Fairfield Road and had to stop in Buxton because of too much traffic."

"Thanks for recommending Haddon Hall." "Buxton is lovely." "Wonderful to receive info for free."

One local told a volunteer that he always directs people from coaches towards the Talking Signposts. The Town Guide was, as ever, much appreciated.

2016 was also the year of the AR-game Pokémon-Go and Buxton was one of the places where creatures could be captured. One volunteer commented that maybe we should be part of this.

### 3. ASSESSMENT AGAINST AIMS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

The aims of the project were to:

Aim	Assessment
To enhance the visitor experience by ensuring that they find their chosen destinations.	Done
To suggest visits to key features and parts of the town which they might otherwise not see	Done
To provide information about activities and events in the town	Done
To maximise "visitor spend" by introducing them to events and shops which they might otherwise miss	Done
To extend similar help to local residents who need and request such guidance	Done
To capture market information about the visitors	Partially done (loss of clipboard containing info).

The measurable success criteria of the project were as follows:

Success Criteria	Assessment
We recruit at least as many volunteers as last year.	Only 13 volunteers showed an interest this year.
At least 80% of the planned shifts are staffed, with at least one volunteer on each.	A total of 36 shifts were covered during July and August, with a preference for morning shifts.
The average numbers of enquiries per shift is at least as high as last year.	Weather dependent, but some of the shifts were very busy. Total number of enquiries are not available (loss of clipboard containing information).
Feedback from visitors about the service is positive.	As always, visitors were positive
The scheme is covered by the relevant local media.	Buxton Advertiser, website
The volunteers report back positively and are willing to do it again.	Yes.

### 4. ANY FURTHER BENEFITS

No further benefits.

### 5. COSTS

Project expenditure against budget was as follows:

EXPENDITURE		
	Budget	Actual
<b>Total</b>	£ 50.00	£ 0.00
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>£ 50.00</b>	<b>£ 0.00</b>

INCOME		
	Budget	Actual
<b>Total</b>	£ 0	<b>£ 0.00</b>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>£ 0</b>	<b>£ 0.00</b>

### 6. LEARNING POINTS FOR THE FUTURE

This year had quite a late start and could have been the cause for a lack of volunteers, so a recommendation for next year is to start as soon as possible with recruiting.

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