

PROJECT CLOSING REPORT – TALKING SIGNPOSTS 2017

1. OVERVIEW

Informed volunteers providing one to one 'signposting' to direct visitors to places of interest and to provide other local information.

2. DETAIL OF WHAT TOOK PLACE

A briefing evening was held in late June '17 at the Old Hall Hotel. I couldn't attend so Derek Bodey took the lead (it was his idea) but I believe it was poorly attended – I don't think our publicity had been very good.

We struggled initially to find a shop to host the signposting materials but in the end Beer District were very obliging. (But they don't open until 10.30 on weekdays (11am on Sundays), so the earliest signposters could start was after 10.30, unless they collected the gear the night before.)

I sent 'round robin' email to around 60 people in early July, using a hybrid of email lists from previous years. Some people were duplicated; some emails bounced back. I tried to keep the email short to encourage volunteers and attached an 'instructions' sheet with detailed information (too much or too little?). I sent several reminder emails during the period, on seeing that very few shifts had been booked in the doodlepoll. I think Janet 're-tweeted' these on facebook.

We tried to cover every day during the Buxton Festival/Fringe period: 08 – 22 July.

A 'doodle poll' was used enable volunteers to sign up to signpost in blocks of one hour (with either a half-hour or 1.5 hour initial shift on weekdays). 20 volunteers signed up on the Doodle Poll but from the records in the notebook (which volunteers were encouraged to use to record the number of 'interactions' they had on their shift) it would appear that only 14 people actually participated.

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 | Achieved whenever a signposter was available |
| To suggest visits to key features and parts of the town which they otherwise not see | Hopefully the signposters did this |
| To maximise 'visitor spend' by introducing them to events and shops which they might otherwise miss | Hopefully the signposters did indeed signpost visitors to local establishments, but probably only in response to a question "where can I buy....? – recommendations of places to eat were more commonly requested rather than shops |
| To extend similar help to local residents who need and request such guidance | Chatting to locals can actually be a distraction for signposters, who then look too busy to help visitors |
| To present a friendly, welcoming face | Achieved |

The measurable success criteria of the project were as follows:

| Success Criteria | Assessment |
|--|---|
| Sufficient volunteers to have a presence during busy periods | We tried to cover 6.5 hours of signposting each day but achieved this only once over the period. On five days we were able to provide 4 or more hours of signposting, but between 1 and 2 hours was more normal (i.e. just one volunteer doing one random |

| | |
|--|--|
| | shift) and on Wed 19 July nothing was recorded in the notebook Given that there were approx 90 hours to be filled over the period, we needed around 45 volunteers to cover them all – 14 was just not enough. |
| Volunteers will enjoy being Talking Signposts | Those who took part seemed to enjoy it. |
| Volunteers will come forward to be the more casual 'Can I help you?' Signposters | I think the 'wear anytime, anywhere' badges initiative will be more successful, although I have only had 3 requests for badges after the initial batch we put in the Beer District – it needs more publicity |
| Feedback from visitors about the service is positive | Yes, very positive (and from personal experience, the 'can I help you' 'wear anytime, anywhere' badges are even more appreciated) |
| | |

4. ANY FURTHER BENEFITS

5. COSTS

Project expenditure against budget was as follows:

| EXPENDITURE | | |
|-----------------------|--------|---------------|
| | Budget | Actual |
| Notebook, badges etc. | | £26.95 |
| Total | £50 | £26.95 |
| | | |

| INCOME | | |
|----------------|--------|-----------------|
| | Budget | Actual |
| | | |
| Total | nil | nil |
| Surplus | | - £26.95 |

6. LEARNING POINTS FOR THE FUTURE

- Don't do it unless we have a much bigger army of volunteers – needs more publicity
- Don't do it unless we can find a hosting place for the equipment that opens earlier in the morning
- The bag and tabard are welcomed; the lollipop doesn't work now that there's nowhere near the map to site it - there's 'competition' from the Crescent site hoarding and all the A frames etc near Turners' memorial
- Perhaps focus on weekends only, so we can get volunteers wall-to-wall through the day? It's hard work getting out and putting away the kit at the start and end of your shift. Much easier if you can pass it on to the next signposter
- Doodle poll was 'improved' just a few days before the Festival opened – the new version is more difficult for people to use (some people did go back to the old version, but this led to duplicate entries in the administrator's version). Not sure of the target audience of volunteers uses doodlepoll anyway....
- I recommend we drop the full signposting service and try the 'wear anytime, anywhere' badges instead

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