

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO

Cabinet
12 January 2022

Report Title: Markets Update

Submitted by: Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To report on the performance of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre market.

Recommendation

That:

- 1. Cabinet note the report and progress made to date.**
- 2. To monitor the town centre market performance and health.**
- 3. Ensure a new market management software system is in place to meet the future needs of the service.**
- 4. Continue delivery of the service improvement plan.**

Reasons

The market has seen many recent changes and is considered a driver for increasing footfall in the town centre.

1. Background

- 1.1 Newcastle's market is an integral part of the town centre offer and contributes to the overall retail experience for local people and visitors to enjoy. The market has been a feature of the town for centuries and remains important both culturally and economically. " – excerpt taken from *Experience Newcastle – Newcastle Town Centre Growth Plan, 2019*
- 1.2 Consultation with Newcastle-under-Lyme market traders was completed with the expert support of the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA). Alongside the findings of the public consultation this resulted in an action plan to re-invigorate the market. A Service Improvement Plan for markets was presented and approved by Cabinet in June 2019.
- 1.3 To affect a turnaround in the fortunes of the market, and secure its best impact in the town, it is managed with the high street, rather than regarded in isolation. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and its partners work collectively to make the markets a success.
- 1.4 Measuring performance has moved to a more focused approach with Performance Indicators now being gained for markets of all frequencies and not confined to just the weekly markets.

- 1.5 Performance varies from full occupancy of stalls at monthly and occasional event markets to lower occupancy at some weekly general markets.
- 1.6 The success of the event markets in the last twelve months, even accounting for Covid-related restrictions and two lockdowns, has driven an increase in visitor numbers and assisted SME local business.

Castle Artisan Market

Now occurring on the third Sunday of each month and having celebrated its first birthday, the market goes from strength to strength. Employing traders from a 15 mile radius, every one of the 45 fixed stalls is consistently taken by SME business, charities and independent traders. Our market pitch areas are fully utilised from the south of the market to the Guildhall with entertainment being a popular use. Additional pop-up stalls have been hired from Burslem CIC using the Welcome Back Fund which enables between 65 and 70 traders each market. In respect of that, there has been over 100% of stall usage. Some Newcastle-under-Lyme businesses opt to take a stall in addition to their premises due to the opportunity for extra income through sales.

Vegan Festival

Held twice, as a Summer and Winter Vegan Festival, this popular Sunday market recorded the highest footfall of any recent market (analysis provided by Newcastle-under-Lyme BID). 100% of fixed stall usage has occurred on both occasions with the pitch areas being utilised for additional traders and entertainment in self-provided gazebos.

Record Fair

Held on six occasions from Spring to late Summer, the Record Fair attracts traders from Scotland, West Midlands and Manchester. Stall occupancy varies from 60 to 80% and is a popular Sunday visitor attraction. This market in Newcastle-under-Lyme is widely advertised by the traders ahead of them attending to ensure a gathering of visiting collectors.

Greyhound Gap

This dog-themed market is in its infancy having occurred on one occasion but utilising all of the fixed stalls. The removal of ten stalls from the south-end of the market in 2020 allowed for a parade ring where popular agility and dog shows were held. In encouraging dog owners and their pets into town, there was additional diversity in the visitors normally attracted to the town centre.

Antique Market

This twice-weekly market was experiencing 100% use of stalls when Lockdown was eased earlier in 2021. The number of traders has steadily reduced to approximately 75% use of fixed stalls. In respect of this there has been a social media drive to attract new traders and the town centre officer has offered to train their traders who do not promote on social media. It remains a popular feature and impacts positively on visitor numbers on Tuesday and Thursday in the town.

Young Traders Markets

Working in conjunction with the National Market Trader Federation (NMTF) Newcastle-under-Lyme continue to host a Young Traders Market. This market encourage traders aged between 16 and 30 into the industry and to showcase the numerous enterprising and creative

businesses young people are starting up. Market stalls are idea launch pads for start-up business where costs and overheads are low. 10 traders attended our Friday General Market to trade alongside established traders. Two of traders, judged to be the best, were entered into the regional finals in Birmingham. Newcastle-under-Lyme resident, Grace Hancock was Highly Commended but did not progress to the National Finals in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Link: <https://www.nmtf.co.uk/ytm2021regionalawards/#1596715567047-442688f7-9310>

1.7 Future aspirations for the town centre market are to continue to diversify the range on offer. As The Council are promoting Newcastle-under-Lyme as a 'town centre for all' it's important that event markets are sought which do not offer more of the same, but continue to explore what is achievable, what is trending and currently popular and what increases footfall. Discussions for more diverse event markets have included:

- Tri-service Armed Forces Day
- A university-run Evening Student market
- Automotive memorabilia and classic vehicle market
- Market involvement in future HG Wells Festivals
- A Pride event

1.8 The General Market has had a small influx of new traders on its busiest day. Saturday Social market has been rebranded with a three week pilot to measure its viability. The aim of this market is to fill all of the void fixed stalls (approximately 20) and to offer a place where a diverse mix of people can interact socially and for the cultural well-being of the people it serves. A healthy mix of contemporary and established general traders will offer fresh food and drink, household items, unique handmade gifts and market garden goods at many price points on The Stones.

1.9 Traders are constantly being sought to increase footfall at the Monday, Tuesday and Friday General Markets. The 16 week new trader initiative is popular and gives new traders an opportunity to build their customer-base until normal rents apply. New traders pay £5 each time they rent a stall for 16 consecutive weeks.

1.10 Through the Future High Street Funding that the Council has secured an element of High Street improvements are being investigated which will include the improvement of the available pitches for the market, leisure and performance space to accommodate specialist markets and events and way finding, all aimed at improving the market experience for both customers and traders.

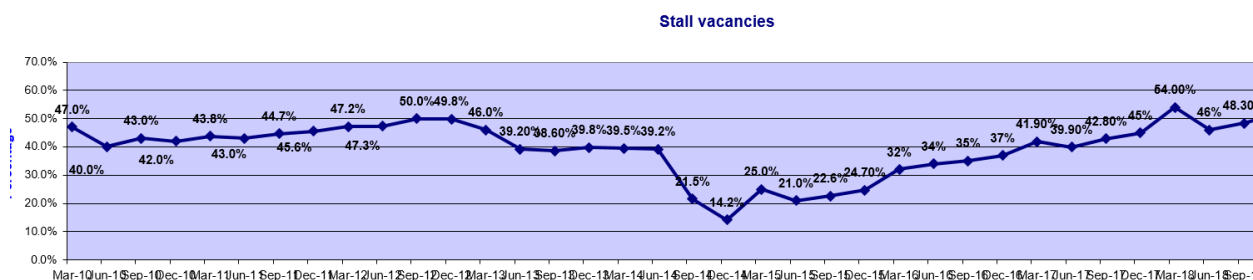
2. Issues

2.1 The improvements made to the market infrastructure since 2019 relate to the recommendations made in the Market Improvement Plan proposals. The challenge remains to manage other key elements of the market, including:

- Improving trader experience and loyalty.
- Improving number, diversity and quality of products.
- Improving the quality of the market experience for visitors.
- Securing the market's long-term future.
- Hosting regular specialist and themed market.
- Promoting the market and its benefits.

- 2.2 Reducing the number of fixed stalls from 55 to 45 in June 2020 addressed the challenge of void stalls on a majority of the general market days and created a pitch area which provide additional space for entertainment and other market-related uses.
- 2.3 Power and lighting was provided to all fixed stalls, with the phase 2 lower market work completed in May 2021. This was financed from the Advance Town deal Fund.
- 2.4 In November 2021, KPR, the market software supplier went into receivership. Its MACCS2 software is used for the daily managing of the markets, accounting for its finance, producing Performance Indicators and retaining personal data on traders and providing cashless transactions through use of a connected card-payment terminal.
- 2.5 In-line with The Council’s digital agenda, it will be necessary to replace this software should a buyer not be identified by the receivers. With the assistance of ICT, a suitable alternative is being investigated and the prospect of an in-house solution explored.
- 2.6 Latest Performance Indicators for Q2 2021 show progress against the 2019 markets and stability from PIs for 2020 with seasonal and other small fluctuations.

Historic PIs to September 2019



Stall occupancy

December 2019	Overall average is 42%
September 2019	Overall average is 42%
June 2019	Overall average is 44%
March 2019	Overall average is 41%
December 2018	Overall average is 48%

Quarter 3 2020/21 – October, November, December 2020

Stall Occupancy Overall average is 58%

Comprising:

Monday Gen Mkt	17%	
Tuesday Antique Mkt	94% *	
Wednesday Gen Mkt	18%	
Thursday Antique Mkt	76% *	
Friday Gen Mkt	44%	
Farmers Mkt	73%	Third Friday/month.
Saturday GM	42%	
Record Fair Market	0%	Lockdown meant this resumed Spring 2021.

Castle Artisan Market 100% **

*Figures for 9 attendances due to Government restrictions on non-essential goods

** Figures for 3 occasions. Resumed Spring 2021.

Quarter 2 2021/22 – July, August, September 2021

Stall Occupancy Overall average is 54%

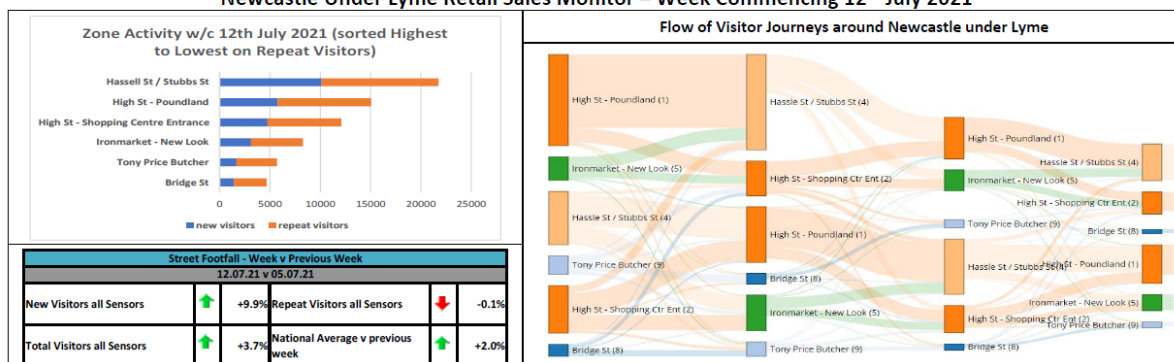
Comprising:

Monday Gen Mkt	23%	
Tuesday Antique Mkt	78%	
Wednesday Gen Mkt	14%	
Thursday Antique Mkt	73%	
Friday Gen Mkt	47%	
Farmers Mkt	40%	Fourth Friday/month.
Saturday Gen Mkt	45%	
Record Fair Market	62%	Monthly.
Castle Artisan Market	100%+ *	Monthly.

*Hiring pop-up stalls to accommodate traders on waiting list in excess of number of fixed stalls.

- 2.7 Due to the popularity of our event markets, there has been a decline in the uptake of the 5 Farmers Market stalls on the fourth Friday of the month. These stalls have now been put back into use by the Friday General Market. Performance Indicators were being adversely affected with vacancies on these small number of stalls which happened just once a month. For example, five absent traders on five stalls show 0% occupancy for that market. Conversely, five absent traders on the general market for the same period would show 89% occupancy. As a unit in Performance Indicators showing “Average Occupancy” the Farmers Market carried the same weight as the six-times-a-week markets.
- 2.8 Dwell time is monitored and reported on by Newcastle-under-Lyme BID’s Wi-Fi counter and the information shared each week. The average dwell time at the busiest Sunday event market in July showed 174 minutes.

Newcastle Under Lyme Retail Sales Monitor – Week Commencing 12th July 2021



Week commencing 12th July 2021

The week prior to all mandatory COVID restrictions being removed in England saw total footfall in Newcastle under Lyme increase compared to the previous week, and by +3.7%. The number of new visitors was up by +9.9% whilst the number of repeat visitors (people that have been seen previously in the area) was down slightly by -0.1% compared to the previous week. Bridge Street saw the greatest rise in new visitors at +18.7%, however saw the biggest decline in repeat visitors at -8.4%.

From the visitor flow chart, we can see that this week from the sensor installed on Poundland that most people started their journey around Newcastle under Lyme on High Street whilst the fewest number of visitors started their journey on Bridge Street. From their first destination, the place that people headed to most was Hassell Street/Stubbs Street however 60% of visitors did not continue their journey from there. The average dwell time around Newcastle under Lyme this week ranged between 174 minutes on Sunday to 148 minutes on Friday. 35% of visitors across the week spent over 120 minutes in the town centre, whilst the next highest dwell time was between 5 and 30 minutes at 31%.

In regard to the day and night-time split, four locations saw a rise and two locations saw a decline during the day compared to the previous week, whilst one location saw a rise and five locations saw a fall at night.

Many thanks to all those who submitted data, making this report possible.



'Newcastle Under Lyme Sales Monitor' is a Partnerships for Better Business Ltd initiative. Data compiled, analysed and interpreted by Partnerships for Better Business Ltd on behalf of Newcastle Under Lyme BID.



3. Proposal

- 3.1 Remain focused on increasing visitor footfall and visitor satisfaction by supplying a manageable number of specialist visiting markets which adds diversity to our regular General Market and licensed Antique Markets.
- 3.2 Continue a drive to recruit new traders to all of our markets and our licensed Markets through traditional and digital advertising.
- 3.3 Expand on the variety of Sunday events markets and their successes, such as Castle Artisan Markets, Record Fairs, Vegan Festivals and Greyhound Gap Dog Market.
- 3.4 Work closely with Newcastle-under-Lyme BID and other town centre partners to jointly deliver successful events utilising the market area.

4. Reasons for Proposed Solution

- 4.1 The proposals are in line with the Council's ambitions set out in the Service Improvement Plan.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 No additional options are being considered.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 No Legal and statutory implications are affected by the proposals.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 No negative equality impacts have been identified.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 Replacement of the market management software will have a financial implication. Costs will be reported when a suitable alternative solution is found. The Council will seek to meet the costs of a replacement system within the revenue budget. Where this is not possible then further budgetary consideration will be required.

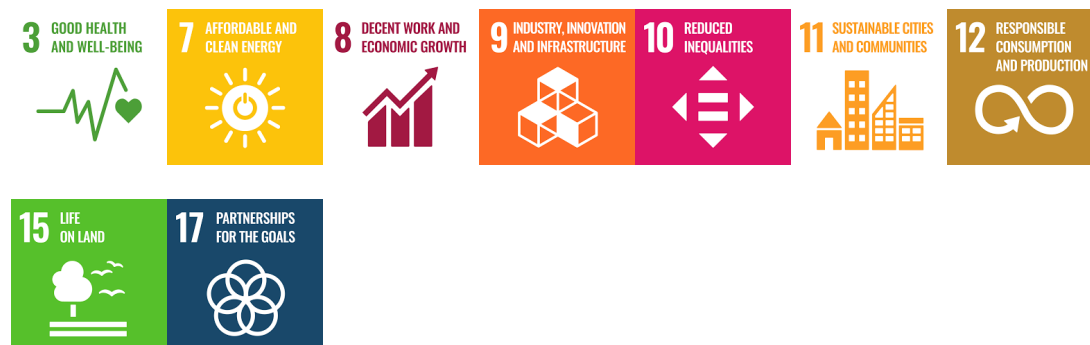
9. Major Risks

9.1 Risk remains that the vibrancy and popularity of the town centre markets diminishes over time.

9.2 There will be regular programme monitoring meetings with the Portfolio Holder, as the accountable body, to ensure the proposals are delivering and the appeal of the markets continues to grow.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 As the proposals relate to improving sustainability they will impact a number of UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG). These are:-



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 This is not a key decision.

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 The Service Improvement Plan for Markets which was approved and adopted by Cabinet on 5 June 2019.

13. List of Appendices

13.1 None.

14. Background Papers

14.1 The Service Improvement Plan for Markets which was approved and adopted by Cabinet on 5 June 2019.

Link: <http://svmma/documents/s29445/2019%2005%2017%20Market%20report%20MH.pdf>

14.2 Experience Newcastle – Newcastle Town Centre Growth Plan

Link:

<http://svmma/documents/s31082/Experience%20Newcastle%20v4%20to%20Cabinet.pdfUSE.pdf>