



Engagement Event Feedback

Thank you to everyone who came and supported our engagement event, held at STACC. It gave us lots to consider, and we've compiled our initial thoughts in this document.

As a volunteer organisation with a small committee, formed mainly from small business owners, we have limited resources and will need to prioritise the most important and beneficial ideas.

To increase how much we can get done, we are forming 3 working groups to address our priority areas. These are:

- **Arts working group**
- **Retail working group (including the High St)**
- **Marketing working group**

We hope that this will allow more people to get involved in the areas which they are most interested in, without having to attend IBTA committee meetings or concern themselves with other IBTA business. These will only be successful if members can give up some time to assist. Please contact info@visitilfracombe.co.uk if you might be interested in being involved.

We've arranged your comments and suggestions into separate sections, if you click the links below it will take you straight to the relevant page.

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Communication

“Set up a platform, blog for B2B, which is free for us all to use and share ideas & help in.”

“Create a more accessible FB / Social media platform that everyone can access not just members.”

“Set up a platform, blog for B2B, which is free for us all to use and share ideas & help in.”

We would be happy to do this, but worry that similar fora which already exist don't get used. Can we suggest that we all make better use of existing Facebook Groups:

IBTA Members Group -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/317438679251130/>

Ilfracombe Tourist Business Group -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/456493278283035/>


Supporting Small Businesses Ilfracombe/Woolacombe/Barnstaple -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/supportingsmallbusinessesdevon/>

“Informal B2B monthly Coffee & Cake type meet ups, so we can share and chew the fat.”

We can trial these and see what demand there is.

“Better, more timely information to business in town on up & coming events, especially independent businesses.”

An events calendar can be found on the Visit Ilfracombe website at <https://www.visitilfracombe.co.uk/what-is-on/ilfracombe-diaries/> If you're a Google calendar user, you can even add it to your own calendar with the  button.

We try to also list events in our newsletter to members, but are dependent on event organisers passing the details to us. If you know of an event which isn't listed, please contact events@visitilfracombe.co.uk

Retail

“Link Harbour, Fore St & High Street with some kind of Booklet Voucher Scheme.”

“A pocket size, printed town centre guide, with discount vouchers etc.”

“High Street needs more focus, more support, more positive advertising to draw tourists & locals in.”

“IBTA to create a Shop Window Display Competition based on specific criteria and offer a prize. Involve locals & tourists to vote.”

“Talk to and be more involved with residents, they can provide our income out of season. It's a robust local community. Speak to them on our behalf.”

There are some great ideas here, which need more time spent on them and working with our great retailers. We are setting up a Retail working group to consider the issues affecting retail outlets generally and the High Street in particular and to agree the best ideas to progress.

The High Street is a challenging environment across the country, but IBTA and ITC are committed to doing all that they can to support it. It does depend on the buy-in and active contribution of the various businesses and property owners to make change for the better.

“Create an On-line Guidebook, which also shows routes around town and ask businesses to offer a discount to the visitor if they are mentioned / included in guide.”

North Devon Council and Torridge Council have the northern Devon app, 'Discover' which has some of this functionality already, but it's not being updated or used. Something for the working group to consider.

Marketing

Quite a few points of feedback related to our marketing. We have formed a working group to focus on marketing and social media which for this season is focussing on three priorities. These are to:

- Increase day visitors who are holidaying elsewhere in North Devon
- Marketing stays in shoulder months
- Gaining information on our existing audience

We will also work on the various other suggestions put forward. To respond to just a few:

“ More Instagram / Social Media showing and linking Harbour, Arts, High Street – Positive images.”

“Too much marketing to people in the local area, try and push marketing to those outside to visit us.”

“Target marketing to the right visitors i.e.: Newly Weds, Retired, Families, people with Disposable Income.”

Hopefully you’ve noticed that these are reflected in our current social media activity. As the town gets busier and the weather improves we’ll aim to get updated imagery to use.

“Promote more local events like The Farmers Market, Local Produce, Food, Crafts etc.”

As above, we need to carefully target our tourist marketing to people outside the area, to entice them to visit. This does mean a focus on the big appeal and less on local events for the Visit Ilfracombe marketing channels. We will post more under the ‘Events 4 Ilfracombe’ banner for events mainly aimed at local people. We will of course continue to promote the whole range of activities which make Ilfracombe an attractive place to visit.

“IBTA public display boards around the town that we could feature members offers, The Harbour, High Street etc.”

Ilfracombe Town Council have agreed to us using one of the advertising frames at Ropery Road Car Park to trial this idea and see if there is enough demand. Watch out for emails with details.

“Be more inclusive of things that are happening outside of Ilfracombe i.e.: smaller villages. This helps our / their businesses too.”

This is something that we try to do, striking a balance between promoting Ilfracombe itself and the wider area to show Ilfracombe as a good base for exploring. We have good links with our neighbours at Woolacombe and Lynton & Lynmouth Tourism centres.

Arts & Crafts

“Use our Artists to create a follow the line (e.g.) to take people around the town past all businesses, Way Finding.”

“Push Arts & Craft & Artisan shops . . .This is a town strength, advertise outside town.”

“Why are you not maximising out publicity for The Art Trail! Its one of our biggest events. Get involved. Could we create a mini permanent Art Trail like St Ives. We could capture visitors before or after they visit St Ives.”

We agree that there is a lot more that we can be doing to maximise art as a draw to Ilfracombe and to enhance the visitor experience. We would like to form a working group to explore these further and action the best ideas.

From a marketing perspective we are keen to promote art as one of the big attractions to Ilfracombe. You may have seen more promotion of the Art Trail on Visit Ilfracombe social media.

Discounts

“Ask IBTA Members to offer locals, residents a Group Discount / Stamp Card Scheme.”

“Encourage your members to offer each other a Discount i.e.: Shops, Accommodation, Insurance, Printing etc B2B.”

We had a number of ideas put forward around discounts and offers. Our first initiative is to establish an Offers page on the Visit Ilfracombe website for local businesses to promote special offers, either aimed at customers in general or locals in particular. Watch out for email and information on our social media about how to participate. We will also be offering physical advertising space for special offers in the Ropery Road car park. A scheme for business to business promotions and discounts will take some more work and planning. Would your business be willing to participate? Could you help to move this forward? Contact us at info@visitilfracombe.co.uk

About IBTA

“What is our membership money actually being spent on?”

Our fees have contributed towards a number of areas :

- The running and upkeep of the VI Website
- Improving our VI online presence by paying for blog content and SEO work
- The upkeep and recent upgrade of the harbour webcam
- Subsidising membership events
- Attending networking events where IBTA represent Ilfracombe
- Sponsorship of major events, bands in the bandstand and Ilfracombe in Bloom each year
- Past projects include the interpretation boards along the SWCP
- Contribution towards Christmas lights on the High Street and Fore Street
- The previous employment of the Tourism Ambassador

“Why is the ITC Advertising so confusing and unfair? Why do large holiday companies pay same as a small campsite.”

We have tried to balance the need to keep things simple but with staggered pricing for different size businesses. We will look at this again to see if we are getting it right but would welcome feedback on how you think it can be made fairer but without being too complicated.

“More of a presence for IBTA, out in the community, who are you. What do you do.”

We do aim to have a presence at most business events in the area as well as a stall at many of the community events. With a small volunteer committee, many of whom also help to run community events, there is a limit to what we can do. We would welcome more people to help.

“Get ITC back but in better location and not so outdated. Make it more modern less stuffy.”

Finding a way forward for the Tourist Information Centre (we presume that is what this question relates to) has been our highest priority since it closed. We have been working with various stakeholders and it’s not been an easy process. You will have seen from our recent email that we now hope to run a volunteer-led service from the old box office in the Landmark. It may not be the best location, but it is the best solution that we have for now, and we will look at whether any better plans can be identified in the future. We have lost some of our previous volunteers, so to make this work we do need more volunteers to staff it. If you know of anyone who might be able to help, please get in touch.

“Have a Directory / Page on your Website that promotes all businesses, not just tourist related businesses.”

We do! www.visitilfracombe.co.uk/directory

Back burner ideas

“More social & networking events organised by the IBTA for non-members. Create engagement with the community.”

As a small team, with limited resources, we feel that we must prioritise our membership, after all they have taken the effort to join and contribute to our running costs. Without members we wouldn't exist, and with more members we can achieve more. Having said that, we will always work on behalf of Ilfracombe as a whole, to everyone's benefit. If you're not a member already, please consider joining and supporting us.

“IBTA to raise serious funding by running chargeable events and then use money on town / marketing.”

“IBTA should sponsor & plan events in parks around town, not just always on the seafront.”

“Use influencers, bloggers to get others to spread the word (offer free holiday).”

“More focus on Recycling, Against Plastic, Beach Cleans etc Boost our town's credentials.”

This is more and more in our minds, and we will routinely promote more eco and environmental initiatives. We understand that posters will soon be going up on town council assets to encourage cleaner beaches etc. Once the old pedestal litter bins have been replaced then recycling bins will be back on the agenda.

More feedback required

“Encourage more Pop-Ups, Restaurants, Art Exhibitions, Activities.”

This sounds great – please get in touch with ideas for practical initiatives that would encourage this?

“Be more involved and present with things like Ilfracombe Spring Clean / Beach Tidy, this shows businesses in town care.”

This is something for all businesses, and we will encourage participation. Any other suggestions to take this forward? The ITC Project Officer reported to the full council that the Spring Clean 2024 “was met with a disappointing limited response from the community despite an increase in social media commentary on how shabby the town, particularly the High Street, is looking.” There was some great work undertaken by Ilfracombe in Bloom, Ilfracombe Gardening Group, Community Resources CIC, Cow Lane Group, Earth Repair Shop, Hele Community Group and town council staff.

How can we improve this?

Please contact any of our committee members, or email info@visitilfracombe.co.uk if you have further thoughts or comments.

Lobbying and feedback from others

A lot of points raised were things more under the control of the various councils. We have discussed them with our council contacts and will continue to lobby our councillors on behalf of local businesses. Our understanding of the various points raised is below. ITC = Ilfracombe Town Council. NDC = North Devon Council. DCC = Devon County Council

“Encourage the Big Businesses in town to do sponsored events such as flower troughs / Flags in the High Street.”

We will discuss with the town council the plans of the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board to see if there are opportunities for local businesses to sponsor items. If you have good contacts or insights into local businesses who could support the town, please get in touch with a committee member.

The High St had flag holders installed many years ago, the majority of these have now rusted and are no longer fit for purpose. A previous project to replace them was shelved due to lack of funding and public liability issues. If sponsorship or funding from businesses could be raised, this could be looked at again. One for the Retail working group to consider.

“Connect & encourage more local producers to be part of a weekly market. Something like a Pannier Market, maybe the old High Street indoor market or under the arches. It would bring people into the town one day a week.”

The Monday market on the seafront is back for 2024 and the Farmers Market is still running first Saturday of the month at The Lantern. We will liaise with them to see how we can encourage more participation.

“Use local Artists to paint out empty shop windows to create a nicer High Street.”

This has been tried on numerous occasions however the stumbling block has always been gaining the permission of the owners of these premises. There are resources available from ITC; if you know the owners of empty premises please pass them to IBTA so that we and the council can work with them.

“Signage in town is poor & unkept. Directional, fun signage needed.”

“Most of the road and street signs in Ilfracombe are in poor condition or simply pointing in the wrong direction”

If details of specific signs (with images if possible) are submitted to [Ilfracombe Report It!](#) these will be investigated at the next One Ilfracombe Town Team meeting.

<https://ilfracombetowncouncil.gov.uk/ilfracombe-report-it/>

The majority of signage in the town is owned and maintained by Devon County Council. When the general appearance of these signs is below par this is raised at the One Ilfracombe Town Team although unless it is deemed a road safety issue this is not a priority for DCC.

The finger post signs are owned by ITC who are aware that some of these have not coped well with our coastal environment. This matter is gradually being addressed. The One Ilfracombe Town Team would welcome discussions on ‘fun signage’. Anyone wishing to attend please send an e-mail to neil.ingram@northdevon.gov.uk or pass your thoughts to Mark Davenport who represents IBTA, and hence local businesses, at the Town Team meetings.

“Lobby for better transport links. What’s happening with National Express.”

Transport is something being looked at by the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board with the issue relating to National Express being discussed at the last meeting. The current situation is that North Devon Council are attempting to open a dialogue with National Express, to date this has not been successful however it will be raised again at the next IRB meeting.

“Pedestrianising of high street, particular days, or times, encourages browsing.”

This has been previously investigated but with the High Street being an A road it was not something that is a simple quick fix due to there being limited options to divert traffic elsewhere.

“Council needs to own the high street. Poor pavements, verges & kerbs, too much long-term scaffolding, street furniture needs painting.”

Ilfracombe Town Council, with limited resources, regularly undertake work on the High Street and at other areas of the town that are the responsibility of both North Devon Council and Devon County Council. These are more often or not areas that are raised via [Ilfracombe Report It!](#) or at the One Ilfracombe Town Team.

NDC also have a team that follows an agreed programme of works that involves cleaning the pavements. The pavements are swept daily by this team with the scarab driver focusing on specific grot spots. On the majority of waste collection days an individual follows the truck on foot to sweep any missed/spilled rubbish into the path of the scarab.

If you notice any specific “Grot Spots” or issues please [use Ilfracombe Report It!](#) - Images are always most welcome.

ITC also have a full time Hygiene Operative and several ITC volunteers, including Peter Joyce who is on the High Street daily.

In relation to High Street furniture, the Ilfracombe in Bloom and Gardening Group have been working in Victoria Place and have done a great job there. Encouraging groups and potentially businesses to adopt and maintain certain areas is something we are very keen to encourage, offering assistance where we can.

Please report and provide images of specific street furniture that needs some attention via [Ilfracombe Report It!](#)

All the old blue pedestal bins are scheduled in to be replaced by NDC.

In relation to scaffolding this is something that will be raised at the One Ilfracombe Town Team with licenses for scaffolding being issued by Devon County Council.

“Too much dog poop, rubbish, and alcohol (being consumed) in High Street.”

Rubbish - Ilfracombe Town Council and their limited resources regularly undertake work on the High Street and at other areas of the town that are the responsibility of both North Devon Council and Devon County Council. These are more often or not areas that are raised [via Ilfracombe Report It!](#) or at the One Ilfracombe Town Team.

Gull Guard bags are also available for use and can be collected from the *Ilfracombe Centre*. These are not just for preventing gulls getting at rubbish but also for preventing household rubbish blowing around the High St or other areas.

Dog Fouling - The issue relating to dog fouling is one we are actively working on with the NDC Neighbourhood Team. It is an ongoing issue across the town that despite educational material and increased signage and the new dog related PSPOs remains problematic. If you do experience repeat “offenders” please use [Ilfracombe Report It!](#)

Street drinking - A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been in place in Ilfracombe since 1st January 2024 and covers the area illustrated. See full details by clicking here . It is hoped that the presence of the Street Marshalls will also see a reduction in street drinking.

“Why is there no regular clearing of pavements & de-weeding in town. Its embarrassing. Not just the High Street & Harbour, but visitors often walk all our streets.”

“More public toilets why should business have to offer our toilets for free.”

North Devon Council decided that due to budget constraints they would no longer be providing Public Toilets across the district. Like the many other Parish and Town Councils, ITC were forced into making the decision that they would have to take on a considerable financial commitment to keep our public toilets open.

Part of this commitment includes a new bus shelter with toilets which will be built at the East end of the Victoria Pleasure Grounds (opposite Wetherspoon). Planning for this was approved on 21st March 2024. A date for commencement of work is not known but funding for it has been secured by NDC.

“Why is all the money spent on the seafront, never the hight street i.e.: Children’s Play Park & new Toilets.“

The funding for the new toilets came from NDC as a response to Ilfracombe not having enough Public Conveniences in that area and the funding for the playground came from 106 funding following numerous requests for more child orientated activities. They are both part of the Ilfracombe Seafront Masterplan

If funding could be sourced, in relation to the High Street, what similar types of projects would you like to see the money spent on? Please make suggestions to our Retail working group.

“Sort out parking, its inconsistent and too expensive. Sundays should be free. Inconsistent confusing directional parking signage around town for visitors. Electronic would be better.”

Fees

Car park prices are set by the relevant Councils shown below, hence a difference in fees is agreed by the respective Finance Committees to comply with their latest budgetary requirements.

DCC are responsible for all on-street parking in Devon

NDC are responsible for all local car parks with the exception of the below and those that are privately owned.

ITC are responsible for Ropery Road Car Park and the permit system that operates at Cheyne Car Park.

Note - Sundays are FREE in Hele and Hillsborough car parks.

Car Parking Signage

If details of the “inconsistent confusing directional parking signage around town” are submitted to [Ilfracombe Report It!](#) these issues will be discussed with DCC Highways at the next One Ilfracombe Town Team meeting.

Electronic Signage

This has been investigated in the past and most recently as an element of a project to address traffic issues on Quay Road. This was not taken forward due to infrastructure and cost issues.

“What’s happening with the Premier Inn site. How long will it look a mess. What’s happening with their parking. Are we introducing residents parking permits for that area.”

Representatives from the developers/Premier Inn have been invited to attend the next Ilfracombe Regeneration Board Meeting.

We are not aware of any residents parking permit system being established in this area by Devon County Council but would be happy to lobby on behalf of businesses if more information is supplied.

“Lobby NDDC to return all carparking income back to Ilfracombe.”

Will be passed onto Ilfracombe NDC Councillors.

“Why do summer rates in the car parks start in March, this isn’t summer.”

The car parks in Ilfracombe remain a major revenue source for both ITC and NDC especially during those periods when visitors are in town. It could equally be argued that October to March is discounted parking for residents. The choice of nomenclature could be changed but Spring rates in August would present the same issue.

“The limited car parking spaces in the High Street should be free & limited an hour or so to encourage visits to the High Street.”

You can already park for free for 30 minutes but space is very limited. Would an increase to 60 minutes be helpful or make things worse?

“Ilfracombe should have some sort of Park & Ride scheme.”

This has been previously trialled but was a failure in so much as the buses that did run were more often than not empty and that people remained intent on parking as close to their intended destination as possible. It is also likely that any investment in a park and ride scheme would ultimately result in a further rise in Council Tax.

“Encourage, make property owners in the High Street clean up and repair the outsides their shops. Most are absent and no longer live here.”

The town council has tried on numerous occasions, however the stumbling block has always been gaining the permission of the owners of these premises. This will be raised at the next One Ilfracombe Town Team meeting as to what powers NDC have to enforce this.

ITC has been promoting the North Devon Town Centre Enhancement Scheme since July 2023. There has been some take up in Ilfracombe and the scheme is still open. Grants of up to £2,000 are available. Details at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/fundingnews/fund/north-devon-town-centre-enhancement-scheme/>

“We need more Street Furniture in the High Street for sitting and resting on. Encourage people to come to the High Street.”

The town council are happy to undertake some partnership working with us at the One Ilfracombe Town Team to identify additional spaces where street furniture could be sited. Funding options can then be explored. This can be considered by our Retail working group.

This issue was also raised at the last Ilfracombe Regeneration Board meeting with a suggestion that raised flower beds with integral seating be placed on those areas of the High St where the pavement width permits.

Please report any current provision that is either damaged or no longer fit for purpose via [Ilfracombe Report It!](#)

“What’s happening with the new Community Water Sports Hub. It seems to be about individuals & business making money. It should be funded by the district council with free events for the community.”

The primary purpose of the Ilfracombe Watersports Hub is to provide a new home for three local watersports clubs; Ilfracombe Gig Club, Y-Sail and Ilfracombe Canoe Club. This new facility will allow them to extend their memberships to the wider community and offer taster events to local residents and visitors.

Another important aim is to provide a site which can be used by the wider community, enabling the public and organised groups to pre-book watersports activities through three approved local activity providers – Coastal Swim Coaching, Active Escape and H2Outdoors.

The hub also provides FREE use of the public slipway, access to the external cold shower facilities and to the Lime Kiln Cafe. The public slipway is NOT to be used by any powered craft or by swimmers unless the latter are taking part in a pre-booked session with Coastal Swim Coaching.

Both the Town Council and One Ilfracombe Project teams work closely with the Harbourmaster and future funded projects using this wonderful town asset are being considered.

IBTA could encourage the clubs and commercial providers to consider taster events, but this is more of a community initiative rather than a business one.

“What’s happening with the Sea Pool.”

We understand that this is still moving forwards with NDC having taken external safety and legal advice. Once new mitigation measures have been implemented into the plan, work will be able to commence.

“What’s happening with policing the drugs problem in our Parks and High Street.”

Below is from a report delivered by Ilfracombe Police at the Annual Town Meeting on 17th March.

“We placed key NHT resources into the local community events, including the Maritime Festival, Barum Boxing Cup event and other events across the year to deter and prevent and any ASB or crime related incidents.

The PEO / front office opening of Ilfracombe PS, will provide a significant boost to the local community and residents across North Devon in their ability to liaise and speak with their local policing team, as well as assist any other queries or concerns.

We have secured the Youth Assertive outreach team for some of the Easter holidays, May Half term and summer if need continues. Assertive Outreach is a project designed to encourage young people away from Antisocial behaviour through engagement in Street Based Youth Work (SBYW).”

In addition to this, a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been in place in Ilfracombe since 1st January 2024. See details here

“We don’t seem to maximise the use of The Landmark, get more involved with using this space. Why is everything at the Queens.”

As a commercial venture, Sellador decide which shows get put on where, and they clearly make more money from The Queens than The Landmark. We have a good relationship with them so would be happy to discuss any initiatives that our members suggest to improve things.

“Encourage retailers to stick to the opening & closing times they advertise. They close when they feel like it.”

We agree that this creates a poor retail experience for visitors and locals alike. We will promote this via our Retail working group and encourage retailers to understand the impact that it can have on the town.

“Paint the Arches. It’s embarrassing and is just an area for problem makers to hang around (especially drinkers). Where are our police.”

The walls and roof of the Market Arches are privately owned however, ITC have previously cleaned and painted this area (12 months ago) and commissioned the art work.

The area is also on the weekly cleaning schedule of North Devon Council and the ITC Hygiene Operative and our Volunteers also regularly clean this area, which includes using a portable jet wash.

The potential to use this as a regular market space is also being discussed.

This areas also falls within the Public Space Protection Order for Ilfracombe which gives the returning Street Marshalls and the Police the authority to confiscate alcohol and to move on any problem drinkers.

It is also worth noting that simply moving people on from one space to another is not an ideal solution which is why One Ilfracombe remains the primary backer for Belle’s Place, which continues to provide free meals and shelter as a viable alternative to spending time under the arches.

As for the Police element of this question please see the response to the same type of question above.



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