

NOTES ON SIDMOUTH INFORMATION CENTRE

Summary of activities and developments June-September 2024

It has been a busy Summer for the Centre team being involved with a large variety of events and activities of interest to holidaymakers and residents, promoting and maintaining Sidmouth's appeal for first-time and returning visitors.

Over the 3 Summer months visitor footfall has averaged 100 per day, including a noticeable number of American, Australian and Scandinavians. It was interesting to meet the former controller of the ship which delivered rocks for our 2 offshore breakwater islands who has returned on holiday to view their durability! I was also pleased to see at the D-day commemoration on the Esplanade an old friend who has spent regular holidays at hotels in Sidmouth since the 1970s.

We have found the various festivals, events and entertainments offered locally meet the wishes of visitors for both relaxation and activity. Many findings Sidmouth for the first time express their pleasure at the town's appearance, standards of accommodation, shopping centre and their intention to return. Since June we have been pleased to promote and recommend the Biodiversity Festival, Manor Pavilion Summer Play season, Town Band Concerts, Folk Festival, Regatta, Sidbury Fair, Sidmouth Walking Festival, Classic Car Show, Carnival Week and Science Festival in addition to our museums, land and water sports plus quality Coast and Country visitor attractions easily accessible from Sidmouth. Our Town Maps are widely distributed including the additional information on local walks, with the design style and content now followed in similar form by Ottery St Mary and Exeter.

Our main source of income is commission on Folk Festival tickets and programmes. With the addition of a few early release season tickets for the 2025 event we have made sales this year of £70,800. This year's 70th Festival was featured on two BBC Radio 2 programmes, two films shown at the Radway Cinema and an excellent 5-day display at the new SVA premises in Church Street. Other revenue includes a diverse range of Visit Sidmouth branded products, Sidmouth-related publications (mostly SVA Museum books), calendars and a wide selection of maps which show the great popularity of walks and short travel to explore the area. We also stock School of Art prints and SeaFest T-shirts displayed on their mannequin and their initiatives continue with art displays and brass rubbing trail on the Riverside Walk and the recent Community Flags in our main streets. We have now obtained further supplies of bus timetables to meet the noticeable increase in public transport use.

This year's project for safe access matting at Clifton beach near the lifeguard station has been welcome, close to our photogenic Giant Deckchair. We have also helped publicise the new beach ramp access appeal. Likewise work throughout the season by Sidmouth in Bloom is praised by visitors and residents and we hope for recognition by future awards.

In the months ahead we will have a close view of major works in the Ham area by South West Water and the redevelopment of the Drill Hall. Our Shoulder Season of opening Monday-Saturday, closing at 4pm will run through October and then reduce from November until early Spring with closing at 1.30pm, for our team to remain responsive to events and issues where we can continue delivering a valuable service for the town.

Tim Shardlow

Information Centre Manager 12/9/24