

August 2020

## The Covid challenge continues! August's meeting reviewed

Challenges faced by businesses due to coronavirus are set to continue for many months to come.

That was the overarching message from Chamber members at this month's Zoom meeting, where attendees spoke of the personal experiences of the last five months.

But whilst all said the pandemic had posed significant issues, it had also provided a number of opportunities, in particular how online platforms such as Zoom had transformed the way business was now being conducted.

However, as Chamber Chief Executive Sandra Doherty – who owns and runs a guesthouse – pointed out, many of those in the hospitality and leisure sectors were simply unable to function during the lockdown.

The continued closure of the Convention Centre would also heap pressure on those businesses reliant on the conference and events trade.

Past Chamber President, Mike Proctor, believed some were using the Nightingale Hospital as an excuse to cancel events, but now was the right time for a single strategy for the town.

Financial advisor Phill Holdsworth from AurumGold, said he believed coronavirus had forced a number of businesses to cease trading, and predicted there was a "tsunami of closures coming".

Vicky Findlow from White Rose Beauty, said her businesses had to teach all its classes remotely, which had been "very challenging". It was now looking at recruiting students for courses beginning in September, and this would be done via a virtual open week, beginning on Monday, September 7.

On a positive, Nanci Downey, a Citizen Advice Bureau Trustee, said they were able to handle far more enquiries remotely than they ever could via face-to-face interviews.

Jackie Snape, the Chief Executive of Disability Action, said that despite the initial problems regarding lack of PPE, the pandemic had drawn people towards the care sector, and they had taken on more staff in two months than in the previous two years.

For IT specialist Martin Mann, the start of the lockdown was particularly busy for him, with people racing against the clock to set up home offices.

With the world-wide retail sector going online, Lottie Kent, from True Financial Design, said now was the time to launch a campaign to support Harrogate Town Centre.

She said: "It is important for us to support the local high street. However, in order for it to survive, it needs to adapt and become a 'buzzing place' for tourists and locals alike."

She was supported in her call by Vicky Findlow, who added that Chamber members should visit at least one local business each week, take a photo and promote it to local people via social media.



**Attendees at August's Zoom meeting**

## **“Traditional Banker” becomes Chamber’s new**

Martin Gerrard, a Senior Premier Relationship Manager based at Barclays James Street branch, has been elected as Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce’s new President.

He takes over the coveted two-year role from Steve Scarre, who stood down in July after an extended period, due to the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the postponement of the May’s AGM to the end of last month.

Martin said: “It’s an absolute honour to be elected at President of Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce, and I’m looking forward to playing my continued part within this important business organisation.

“Whilst Covid-19 has certainly presented us with significant challenges, my first priority is to increase membership and that in turn will give us a stronger, collective voice.

“Working alongside other organisations, we need to jointly promote Harrogate regionally, nationally and internationally. Times are changing and we need to look to the future and not dwell on the past.”

Sandra Doherty, Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive, said: “Martin is one of the most familiar business faces in Harrogate, and we are delighted that he has become our President.

“On behalf of Harrogate District Chamber of Commerce, I would like to say a big thank you to outgoing President, Steve Scarre, who has been a superb ambassador and figure head.”



*Pictured are Martin Gerrard and Sandra Doherty*

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## **Discretionary Business Grants: Phase Three Opens**

Phase three of Harrogate Borough Council's coronavirus discretionary grants scheme are now open.

Full details of the scheme will be published on the council's website. This will include the eligibility criteria, online application form and requirement for supporting information.

Potentially eligible businesses in the Harrogate district are encouraged to apply for a grant, which will be the final phase of the scheme, and will close for all applications on August 28, 2020.

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## **Membership subscription renewal**

At the beginning of the Covid crisis, we suspended our annual subscriptions until a later date.

With the vast majority of businesses now reopen, we have taken the decision to reinstate

## **Hop on a bus to support 'Eat Out to Help Out'**

The Harrogate Bus Company is offering free journeys to support the town's evening economy and businesses signed up to the Government-backed 'Eat Out to Help Out' promotion.

More than 100 restaurants, cafes, bars and pubs in Harrogate district have signed up to the scheme, with 66 taking part in Harrogate itself.

For its part, The Harrogate Bus Company is offering free one-way tickets for use on

its buses after 6pm on the three 'Eat Out to Help Out' evenings each week in August, via its Transdev Go mobile app, to encourage more people to support locally owned food and drinks venues.

The Harrogate Bus Company's General Manager Frank Stanisauskis said: "Our buses play a vitally important role in Harrogate's economy, and we wanted to do everything possible to make 'Eat Out to Help Out' a success for local hospitality businesses who've been through an unprecedented time during lockdown."

Details of businesses taking part in the 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme can be found at:

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## **New Management Committee members**

July's AGM saw two new members join the Chamber's Management Committee.

The pair - Lottie Kent, from True Financial Design, and Jackie Snape, from Disability Action Yorkshire - replace outgoing members Michael Newby, Paul Rawlinson, Sally Roberts and Debra Forsyth-Conroy.

Harrogate District Chamber Chief Executive Sandra Doherty said: "I'm delighted to welcome both Jackie and Lottie to the management committee. At the same time, I'd like to say a big thank you to the members who have stood down.

"Their contribution has been invaluable, and I look forward to seeing them at future Chamber meetings where I can thank them in person."



*Jackie Snape and Lottie Kent*

### **LNER Business Travel Survey**

Our partners at LNER are asking for members' help in gaining some insight into behaviours and attitudes towards business travel in Harrogate.

To assist with this, they have produced a survey link below, and ask if you will spare a few minutes and fill it in.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KJFSZ3L>

### **Something to share?**

*We publish members' news stories on our website and in our newsletter.*

*If you have a news story to submit, email [details](mailto:ceo@harrogatechamber.co.uk) to [ceo@harrogatechamber.co.uk](mailto:ceo@harrogatechamber.co.uk) with a landscape picture.*