

Looe TIC Report June 2015

There has been a slow start to 2015 if visitor numbers in the TIC are anything to go by. Things have started to pick up in the last two or three weeks but overall we are about 10% down on visitors than the same time last year (25302 as of 28th June). The same deficit is showing in sales figures for maps, books etc. Does this mean the town is 10% down, I am not sure? A few B&Bs that I have spoken to reported a quiet May, and that would tally with our figures. Even the Whitsun school holiday was not much busier than the weeks either side, but then again, there seems to be plenty of people in the street.

The latest figures from the Looe Valley Line shows their numbers are up on both last year and 2013. May saw over 10,000 users, nearly 2,000 up on the two previous years. Many of these may just be day visitors from Liskeard or Plymouth, but they are still coming to Looe, although perhaps not visiting the TIC.

The good news is our website is also seeing record numbers of visitors. January saw an increase of over 100% on the previous year and by the end of June we could be very close to the figures for the whole of 2013. In April we transferred the main domain name over from visit.southeastcornwall to looeguide. This is in order to get us higher up the search engines when people search for Looe, and nearly 24% of our traffic comes from people typing in just Looe. Interestingly, the highest performing websites feeding people to us are the Sea Kitchen's Tripadvisor page, Facebook and Forest Holidays at Herodsfoot. Facebook and Twitter continue to be strong promotion tools. We now have over 2000 followers across our two Facebook pages and my recent videos for the lugger regatta and the raft race were seen by a combined number of over 12,000 people in three days! The Lugger Regatta also saw our busiest weekend of the year so far in the TIC.

Number of Unique Visitors	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2009						1,552	1,744	1,645	1,190	918	673	631	8,353
2010	969	947	1,170	1,116	1,567	1,637	1,881	1,762	1,381	953	662	695	14,740
2011	1,256	1,203	1,443	1,765	2,174	2,233	2,196	2,655	1,839	1,151	936	992	19,843
2012	2,156	1,883	2,824	3,344	4,211	4,681	5,371	5,781	4,143	2,924	2,477	2,804	42,599
2013	3,986	3,712	4,883	4,879	6,173	6,671	7,652	8,571	5,116	3,508	2,687	3,169	61,007
2014	4,426	5,751	6,380	7,133	7,986	8,905	10,649	11,031	8,957	6,222	4,984	5,636	88,060
2015	8,775	8,047	9,633	8,622	11,132	13,169*							59,378*
•	Figures up until June 30 th												

The Lugger Regatta seems to have been a big success this year. The weather was kind to those taking part and it provided those of us watching with some classic racing. Hopefully this event will return in 2017, although there seems to be some concern that it might not. It is a great promotional event for the town, but sadly it's not something that anybody can pull together. All we can do is promote it, which we do as soon as we know the dates.

This weekend's Food Festival sounds like it was a big success, being very busy on Saturday, and the Raft Race had perfect conditions with all rafts finishing the course according to Dave Peat. He has said he will give me next year's date as soon as possible; the plan is to get more younger people involved.

Our list of events remains very popular and most organisers now seem to be providing me with information. An Events meeting was held in the newly refurbished Portbyhan bar on May 21st. This was very informal, giving everybody who attended time to say what they were up to and also to have a chance to network with others. Nineteen people attended, seven gave apologies and 40 people never bothered to open the email telling them about it. The July list is our biggest ever, I even had to knock a couple of events from further afield off to fit it all on one page.

The day before the Events meeting I had been in London promoting Looe, Polperro and Cornwall at Paddington Station with the D&C Rail Partnership. Although we used Poldark as a theme, most people had no idea which part of Cornwall the book was based in so it was easy to just tell them about Looe. We had many favourable comments about Looe from people who have been before, and hopefully will return.

The same could be said of the trip to Birmingham to attend the Best of Britain and Ireland Trade Show. Although the majority of people who spoke to us were coach or tour operators and not the general public, we got the impression that many enjoy bringing visitors to Looe. With the regulations governing taking children out of school during term time, the coach trade is something we need to nurture. Edwards are doing a great job at the Portbyhan, too good a job perhaps in that they are full up until the end of 2016 and possibly beyond that now. Sadly, apart from the Hannafore Point, nowhere else in Looe can take a coach full of people. But we mustn't forget the day visitors, or the smaller bespoke groups who don't require as many beds. I now have a database of around 150 email addresses of coach and tour operators. They have all had copies of the Looe map and town description and we have had people coming into the office clutching them. Yesterday (Junes 29th) saw three coaches from a cruise ship moored in Fowey visit Looe, something I have been trying to fit into cruise ship itinerary's for over 10 years now. sadly, because of a traffic incident near Lostwithiel we did not all have time to stop, but now we have done it we should be able to run the tour again.

On a personal point, I don't think the proposed idea of moving the coach park in the Millpool is a step forward. Not all coaches' off load on Station Rd and drivers can be very picky if they find they have got to park a distance away.

The main season seems to have snuck up on us very quickly; perhaps it is because it has not been that busy yet. Let's hope the sun continues to shine and the visitors continue to visit, but at the same time, the TIC could do with some less than sunny days to drive the visitors into the office where they might buy some Eden Tickets or books to read. We can't have it all!