

TIC Report December 2015

TIC Refit:

The reorganisation and decorating of the TIC is well on its way to completion. A big thank you to Karol for all that he has done. We are now trying to sort out the workable area on and behind the counter. As we are not manned at the moment the majority of items for sale are not able to be displayed.

I have been in touch with our major suppliers of leaflets etc and both are going to supply us with custom built stands which we will be able to paint blue. A/Z maps will deliver three stands to sit on the side, plus their rep has kindly offered us over £100 worth of slatwall display items that he has stored in his garage, for free!

With regard to the slatwall, we picked it up on ebay for a fraction of the price we would have paid. Until we know exactly what we will be selling, and what displays the companies might offer us, I am not sure what extra bits to buy.

Chris Sandy is ordering a 32inch TV for us plus brackets. We have also had quotes for the opaque windows. We also had a price for the new signage but I have been advised that this has now been put on hold.

Looe Guide:

I am doing my best to fit the production of the guide into the rest of the jobs I am doing. We have already received around £3000 worth of advertising in, but several of last year's advertisers are still to get back to me with a definite answer.

2016 Membership:

We have started to send out invoices for membership next year including a 10% rise in the price.

Events:

The December list has once again filled an A4 sheet and has been printed out in A3 size for the notice boards at Hannafore and the Health Centre. It was also posted on Facebook, has been sent out by email and is on our website. The events & festival meeting at the Portbyhan on November 9th was very poorly attended despite invitations being sent out to nearly 120 contacts. Those that attended enjoyed a very positive meeting with the main focus being on what can be done in 2016.

As for 2016, we have managed to confirm most of the major events taking place in the area, but always happy to add more. We are going to be working with Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership next year on a trial scheme of putting events into stations. This is a great way of publicising events, but once again, it is up to the different organisations to feed the information to us, all they have to do is reply to an email!

We have also had an initial meeting about the Festival of the Sea 2016. It is hoped this will take place over the first weekend in May and tie in with the start of the 150th Celebrations of the opening of the first lifeboat station in Looe.

Looe Valley Line:

At the meeting on December 2nd it was announced that Sunday trains on the Looe Valley Line will recommence on Easter Sunday next year. This is the earliest we have ever had Sunday trains and is great news for the town. 2015 journey figures are once again very high (just over 100,000) although not quite as busy as 2014. This has been put down to six days when the line was closed in the summer due to strike action.

The Visit Poldark Country promotion day at Paddington, which I was part of, won Best Marketing Award at the National Community Rail Awards in October.

The rail partnership have agreed to have an advert in the Looe Guide again this year.

It was reported that the Coca Cola Truck visit to Newquay produced no extra traffic on the Newquay branch line, whereas when it was in Looe last year the Looe line saw a huge increase in use.

Website & Digital Promotion:

Web stats for 2015. This shows a 25% increase over last year, even before we add the December figures.

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	13,836	13,855	9,594	7,559	5,258		109,480

NewMind contacted us to say the domain name www.visit-southeastcornwall.co.uk was up for renewal and it would cost £60 for a year to include the forwarding service to

www.looeguide.co.uk I thought this was a bit expensive so contacted Barry at Western Web. He agreed and between us we managed to sort things out so that we have now paid £31 for two years. I have agreed with Herodsfoot Webworks to discontinue the loofestivals.org website. We will keep the domain name for redirection or future use. This will save us £69 this year.

I have been to Bude TIC to talk to them about how they have created their website. I have since been in contact with the person who put their site together using Wordpress. He is happy to work with us but we need to know what we want first. It's one of those chicken and egg situations where we can do so much with Wordpress, once we know how we want the website to look. I just haven't had a chance to sit down and think about this recently. What we need is similar to what we have already without the costs!

I sent out an on-line survey to all accommodation providers to gather their thoughts on on-line booking. Despite sending out reminders, I only had replies from 20 out of 47 providers. Of those, only five said they were interested, whilst seven said they might be. Comments received can be found at the end of this report. Gill Bridges suggestion regarding Free to Book might be another answer to our problem. It seems they can link their system to ours and we might then be able to jettison NewMinds completely, so saving a lot of money. I will look into this as soon as possible.

We are continuing to use Facebook to promote events and the town in general even though it is out of season. In the last week our posts concerning the festive weekend and all the rearrangements (including the missing snowman) were seen by over 17,000 users.

Mark Camp, December 2015

On-Line Booking comments:

As promised, some feedback re participating in a Tourist Board Online booking system:

I am not likely to support the call for enhancements to (or investment) in a TIC system that requires me to update it separately from my own booking system. On the basis of past performance, I have found myself occasionally in the peak season (every 2-3 weeks) finding the time to do this (and I consider myself to be an active participant in supporting the Looe TIC compared to many.) The effort and time required is simply not cost effective or viable when I receive hardly any bookings (effectively you are asking me to do something twice, which is not automated and therefore mistakes are likely). So the current system is neither reliable nor accurate.

For it to be successful (and by this I mean generate revenue through bookings), a system needs to both accurate (live data) and be easy to use and time saving, both for the customer and the B&B/hotelier providing the inventory. ie containing genuine live availability and pricing. There are solutions! This would need the Looe TIC booking system to act as a mini OTA (with a fair commission level set). The system should interface via a service provider acting as a channel manager to pull and upload live data from B&Bs booking systems. Currently I update my FreetoBook system and it automatically feeds the OTAs. I need the TIC system to receive my availability in the same way.

Regards

Gill Bridges
Proprietor - Polraen Country House Hotel

We only do direct bookings, over the phone. We don't have to use online bookings, as we like to speak to all our guests and ensure they are booking the right room! (apart from the TIC, we do not use any commission based booking and do not plan to). We would not be interested in booking online and can not see how it could work for very last minute bookings).

Hope this helps, please feel free to ring if you wish to discuss.

Kindest Regards

Darren and Kim Dear

Calico - Looe Tel 01503 262160

We aren't interested in online booking to be honest. There are several reasons for this. First off because we live here we like to make sure we have people staying that aren't going to cause us any issues. With online booking there is less ability to vet who is coming to stay than there is if you either set up an e mail dialogue or, as we prefer to do, you talk to them on the phone. I am not just talking about hordes of 16 year olds booking the cottages but we do have many people who "forget" that they have 2 children in their party and try to cram 8 in a sleeps 6. Or they "forget" they have 3 dogs when filling in the initial enquiry

form. When you speak to them and you can ask them these questions outright you tend to get the honest answer.

Second reason is that sometimes we are full in one of sleeps 2's and if we speak to them we can sell them the other one. Or sometimes get people to adjust their dates to suit us if they are in the position of not really minding when they actually come.

Lastly we now are taking a lot of whole site bookings. Some are for family group parties which actually entail very little work for us. Some though are for wedding receptions which entail a huge amount of work for us. We therefore ensure that the price reflects this. Its difficult to do this with on line booking without again people "forgetting" that they are holding a wedding reception here not a family party.

I know some people really like on line booking because it captures the book now person but we feel we cover that by responding really promptly to enquiries.

What I do feel is really important and has been missing for some time is a proper last minute availability section. That is the kind that VC and secta used to have as a combination. Where you can put down what you have but it clears down once a week on a Sunday so that it becomes a true last minute search. These sites are where we get the majority of our bookings from.

Regards, Kim

Michael & Kim Spencer
Wringworthy Cottages & Farm