



*Dear Councillors*

[Welcome to Looe & Polperro](#) appreciates the opportunity to present an outline proposal for your consideration, as part of your review into the Visit Looe project.

Having been informed that 'alternatives' will be considered as part of your review, I hope that the details, contained within this outline proposal, will be given due attention & consideration; as a positive and cost-neutral alternative for the Council's tourism website and current way of working.

Ahead of my outline proposal, I wish to give you some background & context; particularly for Councillors who may not be familiar with the Welcome to Looe & Polperro website & its supporting social media pages.

## **Background**

Welcome to Looe & Polperro launched July 30th 2020; as the Covid pandemic was starting to have a dramatic impact on the tourism, hospitality & retail sectors across the UK.

The site was funded 100% by myself, to give something back to Looe, my hometown; a place I am passionate about. I was in the fortunate position to have both the time & resources to fund & launch the site.

Prior to launch, I carried out a considerable amount of desk research. I spoke to various local businesses to assess the need for a new, professional & proactive

website to help promote Looe, Polperro & the surrounding communities. Concurrently, I reviewed the various websites already in place for both Looe & Polperro. These appeared dated, were visually unappealing, had poor functionality and were not well maintained.

In addition, I reviewed the tourism websites for St. Ives, Fowey, Penzance, Falmouth & St. Agnes to look at how other key Cornish destinations were presenting their tourism & hospitality sectors.

What this research established, was that a new professional website was needed and one that helped to both highlight & promote Looe & Polperro as great places to stay, shop, eat & drink and explore. It was on that basis the site was launched and has gone from strength to strength as it approaches its 3rd anniversary.

## **The Software**

The Welcome to Looe & Polperro site is built using an open-source software called WordPress, one of the most popular global website platforms. There are around 810 million websites around the world that use WordPress today (roughly 43% of all websites). Building the site in this way has been highly economical as:

- (a) Anyone with experience in using WordPress can work on the site;
- b) Many of the add-on functionalities (e.g., ticketing, events calendar) are free of charge;
- (c) Other than hosting fees of around £200/annum, there are no annual maintenance nor other fees.

Without wishing to denigrate the Visit Looe website; this is built using propriety software - this means software which can be accessed & amended solely by the company who developed & own it. There are two very important restrictions that this immediately placed on the Council. Firstly, any development of the website can only be carried out by the owners of the software, and at substantial costs (seen at first hand by the costs to add the booking engine onto the site, which would have been free if using an open-source software like WordPress).

Secondly, asides from content & images, the website is never 'owned' by the Council - so the annual fee paid is, in essence, a rental/service agreement. At over £6,000 per annum, one year's annual fee would have more than paid for an open-source website, like that of Welcome to Looe & Polperro, to have been developed.

## Welcome to Looe & Polperro - In Numbers

- Circa **300 local businesses** are listed on the website and growing;
- The site has welcomed over **225,000 visitors**, growing daily;
- **15,000 people** are following the [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#) accounts, again growing daily (rounded numbers 13,000 on Facebook & 2,000 on Instagram)

All of this has been achieved solely by myself, gifting around 20 hours each week, 70% of that time on social media, the balance is liaising directly with local businesses.

## Advertising On The Site

For the first 12 months, adverts were given free of charge to all local businesses, to help give them have a profile on the site. Roughly 200 businesses came on board in the first year through direct approaches & word of mouth.

To help develop the site (i.e., to reinvest in the branding, SEO, paid-for social media advertising), I then introduced two simple advertising packages:

- A **£15 Basic Listing**, which gives the business's two images & all the key details of their location & contact detail, with a 25-word summary;
- A **£50 Featured Listing**, which gives the business 250 words of text and 10 images (there are some addition opportunities with sponsored image headers)

The advertising prices are purposefully kept low & affordable, so even a small B&B or independent local shop can have the same presence on the site as a larger operation. There is no third-party advertising on the website (as with the Google AdSense on the current Visit Looe website).

In addition, any local CICs, charity or voluntary organisation is offered completely free Featured Listings; and in 2022, £1,000 was donated back to local good causes (from Looe in Bloom to the Polperro Fishermen's Choir). At the end of 2023, I have committed that **10% of all advertising revenues will be gifted back to local good causes**, in addition to which marketing & advertising support is being given to the Looe Weekender and the NYE Firework displays.

Furthermore, 10,000 Visitor's Maps are currently being printed for distribution through local businesses in early June, as well as [an online digital copy](#) which can be downloaded to the visitor's mobile device.

### **Highly Proactive Social Media**

Welcome to Looe & Polperro has a highly engaging social media presence - this has been gained by testing various messages and campaigns. The socials have a good balance of new content; competitions; sharing of local businesses posts and other local events. We have also had highly successful themed weeks (twice each year) around accommodation, eating & drinking, exploring & shopping.

In April 2023, the [Facebook](#) pages for Welcome to Looe & Polperro had a record month with **over 500,000 interactions**, thanks in part to a proactive approach to the Beyond Paradise series where I bought & launched a campaign using the URL [www.welcometoshiptonabbott.com](http://www.welcometoshiptonabbott.com)

I have also been working with an agency on the development of a strap line to help lift Looe & Polperro's image online, '**Cornwall at Its Best**' is now starting to be used, and the URL of the same name has been purchased.

### **Outline Proposal to Looe Town Council**

I would like to propose that Looe Town Council work in partnership with Welcome to Looe & Polperro when the contract with the incumbent supplier comes to the end of its 'initial period' (I understand to be in November 2023).

This partnership would see the Welcome to Looe & Polperro website become the 'official' tourism website & social media feed for Looe. The current Visit Looe

website being taken offline; with the URL acting as a redirect to the Welcome to Looe & Polperro website. In essence, the relationship with the incumbent provider would not be renewed thus producing immediately cost savings to the Council and local taxpayers by not having the annual & ongoing costs of running the Visit Looe website.

The Council would be able to demonstrate to the local taxpayers that the rationale for this new partnership gives immediate cost savings; meaning the Council are not trying to compete with another local provider which is well regarded & supported by both business & the end users. Furthermore, it can illustrate that the website, representing the tourism, hospitality & retail sectors of the town, is self-funded by those very businesses.

My proposal would be that Looe Town Council's team continue to provide the face-to-face resource of the Tourist Information provision. Welcome to Looe & Polperro would work closely with them to help fund & provide quality branded materials, like the new Visitor's Map.

Welcome to Looe & Polperro would give direct access to the Events & What's On module of the website to the Council team, so that the team can upload any events taking place, either those they are directly or indirectly responsible for as well as wider community events.

Welcome to Looe & Polperro would work closely with the Council's team, as well as other third parties, on the branding & promotion of any events being organised/facilitated so that there is a more cohesive look & feel to the branding & promotion of events being organised across the Town.

Welcome to Looe & Polperro would work closely with the Council team on social media messaging around key events & activities throughout the year.

The above are, at this stage, very much an outline by way of opening a new way of working both by the Council's team responsible for Visit Looe, as well as a partnership with Welcome to Looe & Polperro.

## Summary

The review being undertaken by Councillors provides an opportunity to reset the relationship between Visit Looe and Welcome to Looe Polperro; concurrently, providing Looe Town Council, and its local taxpayers, with immediate cost savings.

At a time when both businesses & households are facing daily cost constraints, it would be seen as positive & proactive step by the Council, working in partnership with a tried, tested, well-supported & well-respected website & social media campaign, for the good of the Town.

Should Councillors require any clarification or have any questions, I'd be more than happy to be contacted direct by email, phone or video. I can also make myself available for face to face meetings between November 18<sup>th</sup>-December 16<sup>th</sup>.

I look forward to a response upon conclusion of the review.

*Yours Sincerely*

Peter Friend

[Welcome to Looe & Polperro](#)