

City Management Newsletter

Rows Improvement Campaign

The Chester Civic Trust and Chester City Council are inviting owners, managers and tenants of businesses on Chester's Rows to meet with the aim of working together to form an improvement plan which will focus solely on the Rows.

Although good work has been undertaken recently such as the installation of CCTV, installation of a fire detection system and improved cleaning of the steps, improved pigeon proofing and graffiti removal other issues need to be tackled, including cleanliness, maintenance, anti-social behaviour, graffiti, littering rough sleepers, restrictions on advertising displays, use of stalls and empty properties.

If you would like to be part of this joint approach to improving a unique and defining feature of our historic city please come along to the meeting being held on

Wednesday 21st May at 5.45pm at Bishop Lloyd's Palace, 51-53 Watergate Row.

'A' Board Advice

'A' boards placed in the street are a potential hazard to pedestrians especially to people who do not see so well. There are a number of 'A' boards around the city particularly in Eastgate Street and Watergate Street that have the potential to cause problems. Traders are requested to remove these signs otherwise the Council will have to take appropriate action.

For further information or advice contact Colin Stredder
Area Highways Manager 0845 002 0666.

City Management will continue to offer opportunities to promote your business in Chester - make sure we have your details to keep you informed.

Smile ~ Chester Style

We have been delighted with the response to Act 1 of our Smile campaign. With over 60 different retailers taking part in various aspects of our programme and in some cases significant redemptions against the coupons we put out, the public and retailer response was terrific.

As a footflow indication of our success for the 4 weeks from its start in February, through until the end of March we, as a city remained almost unchanged year on year. Against the backdrop across the country of significant falls in retail sales and of high street footflow, and of course our bridge closing at Hoole, it is great to see us collectively making a real difference.

Smile Act 2 is underway - Chester in Bloom

We already have some 50 retailers decorating their windows in the style of Springtime in Chester and with this culminating in June with the Home and Garden show and an expected 10,000 visitors to the city on that weekend. We are hopeful that our city will look terrific and that you as retailers will see the benefits again of our campaigns, so that Chester reinforces itself as a must visit destination, now and in the future when the economic cycle improves.

When our planters are in the street and the hanging baskets are on show and the residents show their gardens I think we will really see the difference.

Our aim is to not only drive footfall in to Chester, (which is expensive - but vital) so that you can make more sales but to also increase the quality of the experience for our visitors. That is why we have raised the car park agenda, the cleaning of the city; that is why we are working with Chester performs and Chester Festivals, to get more events,

imagery and street theatre and why we have had people on the streets getting information from you, our retailers, about how to contact you, how to get you involved and tell you what we are trying to do.

What is important is raising the Chester experience to create repeat custom. We know from retailers that Easter was strong this year, in spite of the appalling weather and I am sure in part that was to do with the 16,000 people who were at the Food and Drink festival, another reason for working with our festivals and events.

We will keep building Chester events, keep communicating with you and keep working to re-establish Chester as a must visit city, as your success is vital for the success of Chester.



David Pickering
Chairman,
Chester City Management

Ahead of Schedule

Hoole Bridge reopened on April 30th five days ahead of schedule. Cheshire County Council's Director of Environment Tom McCabe said "I would like to thank local businesses, residents and drivers for their understanding and patience during the closure of this extremely busy road. In particular many local businesses made useful suggestions both before and during the works - and many of these ideas have assisted customers in getting to premises and keeping the business going." Chester City Management would also like to thank all businesses who participated in the Hoole Bridge communications and campaign activities.



Chester Retail Sales and Hotel Occupancy Results Reflect National Trading Patterns

British Retail Consortium - KPMG Retail Sales Monitor for March 2008 reports sales values falling for the first time in two years. For April, BRC reports that sales of clothes and shoes suffered their biggest fall in more than eight years.

The BRC-KPMG Retail Sales Monitor measures changes in the actual value of retail sales from a sample of retailers. UK retail sales fell 1.6% on a like-for-like basis, compared with March 2007, when sales were up 3.9%. This decline was the worst since July 2005. For April sales dropped 1.5% compared to the same month a year ago.

The reported reasons for these figures include:

- The earlier Easter, together with extremely unseasonal weather and school holidays spread across several weeks, along with the additional spending for Easter being in March this year but in April last year.
- Food sales slowed after two strong months and clothing and footwear were the worst for at least 8 years. Home wares and furniture fell further, despite continued discounting and promotions.
- Consumer confidence has fallen further to new lows. With increasing demands on household budgets, shoppers are very price-conscious and reluctant to spend on big-ticket items. Heavy discounting was still needed to tempt customers to buy.

These results suggest that concerns about inflation, falling house prices and cost basic food essentials have affected consumer confidence and impacted on sales as every sector, except food, saw sales down on a year ago.

The Local Picture

Locally, through gathering data in our Performance Monitor from large and small stores, we can see this national trend replicated. Taking the average results for participating large stores the

percentage change in receipts on the same week in previous year shows a decrease from mid March to end of April following a run of positive results from the end of Dec 07. The average of small saw results for percentage change in receipts on same week in previous year shows positive results in the first two weeks in March, almost level in mid April, and then falling again by the last week in April.

For large stores, the average figures for percentage change in footfall compared to the same week in previous year shows a slight increase last week in February and second week in March, but for all other weeks the average is a decline on the same week in previous year.

Hotel Performance

Hotel performance in Chester in the first quarter of 2008 mirrored regional performance nationally according to results announced nationally by Deloitte and collected locally through Visit Chester & Cheshire co-ordinated LJ Forecaster.

Room occupancy for regional hotels nationally was just below 65%, for Chester 64.3%. Average room rate nationally was £65, for Chester £66.20.

Room occupancy and achieved room rate in Chester were both up on 2007 in three of the first four months of 2008.

Deloitte's survey is reported each month in the Travel & Hospitality Industry Digest. Monthly results for the UK Occupancy Survey used by Visit Britain take much longer to be published.

For more information

on the Chester's Performance Monitor contact **Alison Kelly**

T: 402525

E: a.kelly@chester.gov.uk

or **Roz Munslow**

T: 402331

E: roz.munslow@chester.gov.uk

or download a form and information from **www.chesterccm.org**

Participating organisations receive access to detailed data.

Making Chester a safer place to visit, work or shop

Chester Against Business Crime celebrates its first year of our exclusion scheme being in force.

The principle is that anyone caught stealing from any of our member's shops or causing anti-social behaviour will receive a one year ban from all members for a year.

We work closely with the police on this and they will issue a banning notice on our behalf at the custody suite, providing they have a previous similar conviction in the last 12 months.

This has tended to scoop up most of our prolific offenders whose only option is to move out of the area should they wish to commit further crime. Although we may have moved the problem on to Wrexham or Broughton Shopping Park for example, we liaise closely with our regional partners to minimise the impact.

The benefits to this robust approach are starting to show in the reduction of volume crime in the City Centre.

Officially Chester has seen a reduction in crime over the last year of 12%. Indeed Chester is one of the safest places to live in the country.

Any crime is one too many for our visitors to experience and we never intend to get complacent. CABCC will continue to work closely with the police and other partners in the city to make it a safer more pleasant place for us to live work and shop.

For more information

on how to become a member of Chester Against Business Crime

contact **Bob Lelliott**

T: 01244 403615 or see

www.chesterccm.org/safety.html

International business leader brings a brighter future for Chester

Hope is high across the city as the newly appointed Chairman of Chester Renaissance commits himself to attracting huge investments.

In a bid to lift Chester onto the international stage by 2015, Shane Flynn, former Chief Executive of MBNA Europe, is planning to create a strong bond between the public and the private sector in Chester.

Mr Flynn is a high profile and respected businessman, who is known in the financial world as the person to attract international investment. He said, "Chester is a great city, but it can and needs to be even better if it is to compete with places overseas and in the UK."

Chester Renaissance is a £1.5 billion programme currently being undertaken by the private and public sectors, rejuvenating the city to become a "must

see" European destination". A revitalised Chester will see retailers benefiting from floods of visitors wanting to see a transformed city pulsing with vibrant colours and life. The plan intends to provide extra leisure activities, hotel accommodation and business space within the heart of the city, and Chester City Management will offer its full support from Chairman, David Pickering.

With the private sector already contributing £10 million into Cruise, Oddfellows, the Racecourse and the first phase of improvements to Chester Station nearly complete the start of renaissance Chester is well underway. The North West Development Agency has already committed £1.5 million to the programme and more is on its way.

A strong vote of confidence from former Chester City Council Executive Member for Development, and now Leader of the

Shadow Council for Cheshire West and Chester, Councillor Mike Jones, assures the chairman's role in playing a key part in the City's future.

"He brings with him a wealth of international experience, perspectives and ideas about this city. We need someone who is really prepared to challenge and progress."

He added *"In Shane we have someone who shares our commitment to Chester"*.

City Management will keep you informed of each new development planned in this exciting phase.



Shane Flynn, Chairman of Chester Renaissance

Walls Update



In response to your questions about the recent collapse of a section of Chester's historic walls here are the main points of information:

- Chester City Council closed a 30 metre section of the walls on 3 April in the interests of public safety after part of the ancient monument collapsed.
- An exclusion zone been firmly secured around the scene of the collapse alongside the Grosvenor Hotel and at the rear of adjacent properties. This is being patrolled by community safety wardens and the police have also

increased their presence in the area.

- The council is closely monitoring the situation through regular inspections and is in the process of planning for a full survey of the whole walls circuit in line with its Conservation Management Plan.
- If further investigations conclude that we could safely provide a level walkway around the affected section of walls then this will be done. If this is technically/legally/financially too difficult then the existing diversions will continue until further notice. The diversions have had to take account of using the pedestrian crossing.
- The timescales of the total project will depend upon the extent of the damage and the complexity of the solutions.
- The opening of Cruise nightclub was not affected by the work and the venue opened to the public as scheduled on 3 May.
- A web page is being created which will feature regular updates, diversion routes and the walls heritage trail.

- The council is now working with English Heritage and independent surveyors to design a temporary structure to shore up the wall so that a more detailed inspection and laser scanning (for archaeological purposes) can take place. This will inform plans for longer-term support, which will allow for the reconstruction of the wall.
- Access to the Eastgate Clock and Newgate walls is not affected.
- Anecdotally, the blue badge guides and Roman Tours aren't getting any adverse feedback - the public seem to understand that this was an unavoidable problem and has created extra interest in our historic assets.
- The permanent signs diverting people walking along the walls are in place.

If you require further information, in the first instance, contact Richard Spensley on 01244 402107 r.spensley@chester.gov.uk or see the website for the latest news www.chestercm.org

Carry a Bag Appeal launched in Chester

Chester City Council and Friends of the Earth have joined forces to reduce the amount of plastic bags used by shoppers in Chester.

A staggering 150,000,000* carrier bags are used in the UK every week and the 'carry-a-bag' campaign is aiming to help reduce this by encouraging people to carry reusable bags instead of collecting numerous plastic bags every time they go shopping. Funding from the Cheshire Waste Partnership has been used to develop the pilot scheme, which is being supported by a range of local retailers. Their feedback will then be used to extend the initiative to even more businesses later this year.

Councillor Neil Ritchie, former city council Executive Member for Environment and now Executive Member for Environment for the Shadow Council for Cheshire West and Chester explained: "We have been handing out free 'Bags for Life', which are stronger and more durable than carrier bags. We've also been encouraging people to re-use any plastic bags they have instead of throwing

them away. People in towns and cities across the country are keen to see plastic carriers replaced with greener alternatives so I am delighted that our retailers are setting such an excellent example by helping shoppers to be more environmentally friendly."

Similar campaigns have proven very successful in other areas such as Llangollen. Many major supermarkets and fashion retailers are now selling hemp and cotton bags or charging for carrier bags in a bid to be more eco-friendly. Some shops have stopped supplying plastic bags altogether, due to the negative effects they can have on the environment. The vast majority of plastic bags are not reused, ending up in landfill sites or as litter, where they will remain for at least 500 years. They also pose a great risk to wildlife if they get into seas and rivers.

For more information as to how to get involved with this initiative contact **Grace Parker** on T: 01244 402399 or E: g.parker@chester.gov.uk

*Source: www.recyclenow.com

Dates for the Diary:

Trading in the Rows, Rows Improvement Campaign

a joint invitation from The Chester Civic Trust and Chester City Council at Bishop Lloyd's Palace,
51-53 Watergate Row, Chester
5.45pm – 7.45pm
Wednesday 21st May

Small and Independent Traders Meeting

(held every last Tuesday of the month)
next meetings at Chester Town Hall
5.45pm Tuesday 22nd May
5.45pm Tuesday 24th June

Chester Against Business Crime

Members meeting at Chester Town Hall
10.30am every Wednesday

Chester City Management Retailers and Stakeholders Meeting

at The Blossoms Hotel,
St John Street, Chester
5.45pm Wednesday 28th May

Sealand Road Area Retailers Meeting

(held every last Thursday of the month at 10 am at Megabowl)
10.00am Thursday 29th May

Useful Contacts

Chester Customer Contact Centre

Litter, graffiti, fly tipping, pigeons and community safety issues
T: 01244 402477

E: customer.contact@chester.gov.uk

Chester Against Business Crime

T: 01244 403615

E: r.elliott@chester.gov.uk

Chester City Management

T: 402331/402525

www.chesterccm.org

E: roz.munslow@chester.gov.uk

Police

T: 0845 458 6384

Chester City Council Building Design & Conservation

– Help and advice for signage, repairs and conservation issues.

T: 01244 402327

Chester City Council Community Safety Wardens

T: 01244 402477

E: customer.contact@chester.gov.uk

Chester City Council Licensing Team

T: 01244 402138

E: licensing@chester.gov.uk



Retailers at the recent launch