

**RETAILERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING**  
**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 18**

Present

David Jackson	(DJ) Chair The Lanes	Rebecca Mckay	(RM) The Fragrance Shop
Cassie Heal	(CH) Secretary/Minutes	Savanah Middleton	(SM) VIP
Holly Woodhead	(HW) Marketing	Fiona Edwards	(FE) Library
Andrea Dawson	(AD) Grape Tree	Sam	(S) Ann Summers
Sian Gibson	(SG) Peter Jackson	Dale Newton	(DN) Debenhams
Vicky Cumming	(VC) Pandora	Holly Parkinson	(HP) Oak Tree Animal
Rev K Teasdale	(KT) City Centre Chaplaincy	Damon Leslie	(DL) Fone Xtras

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Body Care, Card World, Holland & Barrett, Shopmobility, The Perfume Shop, The Library and Eden Valley Hospice. No other responses received.

**2. Trading Review**

Footfall for October was 813,000 against 733,000 last year which is +10.8%, this is comparing the new footfall system this year to the old footfall system figure in 2017. The figure is positive v last year even taking into account that the old system had started to fail. We have been running the new system in the background since June and cumulative from June to October the figure is 4,167,000, compared to the old system figure for the same period of 3,889,000 representing a 7% increase.

Retail continues to be tough as we see reported in the papers and on the news. Large space retailers such as House of Fraser, Debenhams and John Lewis appear to be struggling. Many factors are having an impact on this such as Brexit causing the exchange rate to drop, Business rates continue to be an issue (although some retailers have received good news in the last budget), minimum wage rising can be an issue for retailers on a tight budget, online continues to be an issue although a lot of retailers now report online as part of the overall figures. But the major factor is that people are now spending money differently, on experiences/memories; we spend money on things such as concert tickets which sell out in seconds, premier football grounds are full again every week, people are spending money on weekends away and eating out at nice restaurants. It's also been referred to that when people now buy high street they prefer a more upmarket product and buying something that lasts longer rather than a value item.

The Global Data Company are expecting sales of £99bn in the golden quarter (October, November, December) They are forecasting that non-food retail sales will be +1.6% on the previous year, and food & grocery sales will be +2.5% so overall retail will be approx.+2%. They further report that 1/3 of all electrical sales are bought in the golden quarter with big things expected for electrical sales on Black Friday and Boxing Day. Technology is something that people are continuing to invest in including gaming, with some key games coming out in the golden quarter. Home also continues to perform well.

**3. Christmas**

• **Trading Hours**

- **Late Night Shopping** starts on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November with our Late Night Shopping Launch, the vast majority of our stores will be trading until 9pm.
- **Black Friday** falls on 23<sup>rd</sup> November with some retailers trading later such as Debenhams, and Fone Xtras until 8pm. Primark, H&M, HMV, Jack Jones, Schuh will be trading until 7pm.
- **Boxing day** will see the majority of stores open.

**4. Marketing**

This week the gift guide will be distributed to 25,000 homes across Cumbria including West Cumbria. The Gift Guide is also online and will be distributed to our email database of 17,000 people and is also on our Facebook advert. Thank you to everybody who got involved. We will also be handing out the gift guide at the car park barrier entrance on key dates.

The Late Night Shopping Launch this year will follow a similar theme to last year with food & drink stalls coming in for the day plus in the evening live music/entertainment, Santa will be here for a one off late night visit and for the first time we will also have free parking from 6-9pm. We will be promoting your Black Friday offers; you should have received an email asking for your offers which needs to be returned by end of day on 16<sup>th</sup> November.

Santa will be visiting his grotto in the centre every Saturday and Sunday in December from 11-3pm up until the 23<sup>rd</sup> December with proceeds going towards Cash for Kids Mission Christmas.

Future marketing will be focusing on more video work; we will be doing regular style story videos working with a local model and will highlight key products throughout the shops. The videos are available on both our website and YouTube channel.

## **5. Lettings Update**

As you will be aware New Look are relocating and their previous store will be redeveloped and split into 3 units, we can't yet say who is going in yet but we are fairly certain we have 2 of the 3 signed up. The building will undergo major change internally to reconfigure into 3 units which may take up to 6 months so new openings will not trade before the summer of 2019.

## **6. Any Other Business**

The Christmas lights switch on in the city centre is on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November when our car park will be open until 6pm.

There is an Artisan Christmas Market in the city centre from 28<sup>th</sup> November- 2<sup>nd</sup> December trading 11am – 6.30pm and until 9pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November.

KT can arrange for school choirs to visit and sing in stores, this can be advertised in Keith's church magazine and in his newspaper column.

**The Future of Retailers Meetings?** In terms of retailers meetings we have struggled with attendance this year in spite of canvassing opinion as to the suitability of the day and time. We will review this again in the New Year and will send out a letter for your feedback on the matter.

**The next retailers meeting is to be confirmed.**