

Draft ver.2

Reviving the Market Plain

A Proposal

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Overview

For a thousand years Lowestoft has had a market...until recently.

There is wide-spread local support for re-establishing a market on the Market Plain, however efforts by the Lowestoft Town Council have stalled. This proposal is an attempt to revive those efforts and see a way to re-establishing a market that will benefit the High Street area, increase local retail viability by raising footfall, and give the citizens of Lowestoft a sociable, vibrant area to gather and shop.

Recent History and Investigations.

The Lowestoft Town Council has investigated reviving the market on the Market Plain for over a year. Councillors have attended a conference on markets in Cambridge with NAMBA (National Association of British Markets, <https://nabma.com/>) . We have had experts from

NAMBA assess our market and with their reports and our own experience have come to these conclusions-

- 1- The space on the Market Plain is too small for a viable permanent market.
- 2- Lack of parking nearby makes the market unattractive to vendors and to buyers.
- 3- Lack of regular footfall makes the market unattractive to vendors.
- 4- The investment in permanent stalls by LTC vs the cost of recovery (leases) makes investment unattractive. Vendors don't want to invest in permanent stalls and the LTC is not open to accepting caravans and ad hoc stalls on a permanent basis.
- 5- Although the spaces have been offered at peppercorn rent, there has been lack of uptake by full time vendors because of 1 through 4.

So we are left with a chicken and egg problem. We won't attract vendors until we have footfall by the public and nice stalls. We won't have footfall by the public unless we have a reason to go there (vendors) and the LTC can't invest in stalls without footfall to legitimise the investment.

Does Lowestoft need a Market on the Market Plain?

Do we even need a market? There is a strong desire for a market voiced by the public. This has been made evident in public consultation, in public meetings and in communications to councillors. The public would welcome a market. There has been private conversations with vendors that support coming to a new market on an interim basis. The vendors express frustration with lack of communication and not knowing the ground rules for participating. This paper will address that problem.

It is proposed that the original idea of a full time static market was too ambitious and we should think smaller.

This proposal is for a regular once a month market of itinerant vendors. If this once a month market works out, it can be expanded to twice a month and if that works out we will see permanent vendors become interested in the spaces because we will have increased footfall.

Advantages of a Once a Month Market

- Flexibility of vendors. We are not locked into leases.
- Encourage small entrepreneurship. Vendor investment is minimal.
- Regular market times will be easier to remember and advertise.
- All the advantages to the High Street area of a market, whilst still allowing other events to use the space.

Disadvantages of a Once a Month Market

- Needs a site manager.
- Needs a way for people to pay for stall space that is not cash based and easy to manage.
- Lack of commitment by vendors. What if vendors don't show up?
- "Car Boot Sale" image

This paper proposes solutions to the disadvantages.

Marketing the Market

First, the LTC needs to "market the market". Marketing is not just advertising, but is setting up a logical plan of action that will allow both vendors and customers to participate. We need to figure out the old mantra of Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, and How much.

What, Why, and Where

"Why should we have a market", "What" and "Where" have already been addressed in this paper. We will have a market (WHAT) because there

is a demand by the public (WHY) and we will have it on the Market Plain space (WHERE).

Who

- **The Market will be offer spaces to vendors, craftsmen and artisans who want to sell their wares.**
- Criteria of who is eligible to sell will be drawn up by the LTC and include bans on items that are not legal or desirable (ie knives).
- Items will be of new manufacture, crafts, handmade/artisan, charity stalls, vintage/antique, books, fruits and vegetables, candy/confections, food (needs to be licensed), clothing. It is understood that there is a fine line between vintage and junk and that the council will need to discuss whether the car boot/ garage sale vendor will be discouraged.
- Vendors will be required to have all applicable licenses and insurance. Insurance cover could be offered through a Residents/Friends of Association.

When

- **The Market will be once a month, unless demand is so great that twice a month, or even weekly if desired.**
- Dates should be set a year in advance so that stall holders can plan their market days.
- Kessingland Car Boot is open every Sunday from January to November. Gorleston Cliff Fest is June 28.
- Proposed is the last Saturday of the month. In 2019 that is June 29~~2~~ (note ~~during First Light Festival~~), July 27, Aug. 31~~24~~, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 23, and Dec. 7 and Dec. 21 for ~~a~~ special Christmas Markets). Proposed to be closed in January and February.

How

- **It is proposed that stalls be sold online through Eventbrite Professional** (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/>).
- **Advantages of Eventbrite include:**
 - Free to set up. EventBrite takes a cut of sales once they are made, so no initial investment by the LTC.
 - Stalls can be sold as needed.
 - Stalls SPACES can be individually reserved and sold (like buying seats at a theatre) and based on a local site plan that is clear to both the vendor and the LTC.
 - No cash is handled and all money goes directly to a bank account.
 - Vendors can use PayPal and Credit/Debit cards.
 - Refunds can be made without handling cash.
 - Proposed that only those who have submitted insurance and license information be allow to buy stalls. This information can be submitted to the LTC via email or in person.
- **It is proposed that the first Market Days be managed by the LTC with the help of councillors to get it off the ground** and iron out any wrinkles, but that the eventual goal will be that they will be managed by a local volunteer “Friends of the Market Plain” or High Street Residents Association group.
- **It is proposed that any money made on the stalls be used for management of the market (advertising, insurance, clean up) and any left over after market expenses be used for High Street improvements** (flowers? Benches? Christmas lights?) at the discretion of the Friends of/Residents group and with the guidance of the LTC. It is hoped that the ability to fund positive

change in the High Street area will be an incentive to take on the responsibility of managing this market.

- **If the local residents group does not manage the market, then the LTC will manage it** and it will have absolute discretion over any income.

- **“Managing the Market” will need to be clearly spelled out.**
Since there will be no collection of money or oversight about the traders, this will mean that a representative will be on location every Market Day to assist the vendors find their stall slots, help settle any disputes, make sure the vendors clean up at the end of the day and if not, manage the clean up, and report back to the LTC about any problems on the day, suggestions for improvements, etc.

- **Rules and Regulations for Vendors need to be clearly listed.**
 - What can be sold and what cannot.
 - Permitted type of marquees, caravans, stalls.
 - Resolution of disputes.
 - Acceptable/unacceptable vendor behaviour.
 - Rules on setting up (times, loading and unloading, vehicles) and tearing down.
 - Cleaning up rubbish.
 - Cancellation and refunds criteria.
 - Propose that there be no refunds or cancellations. NO events fee will be refunded unless the LTC cancels the entire Market. There will be no rescheduling in the event of cancellation.

- **Advertising will be as wide as possible** with notices on Facebook and social media, LTC websites, free websites, on notice boards, and in the LJ when it can be secured inexpensively.
 - Vendor information needs to be widely disseminated. One complaint now is that vendors don't know who to contact.

- **It is proposed that if this model is successful, that this model can be used in other areas of town** that request fetes, such as Normanston Park, Sparrow's Nest, and Kensington Gardens.

Summary and Conclusion

We can re-establish a market, but we need to be practical in our execution and realistic in our ambitions. The market should be held on regular dates so that people are used to the idea and so make an effort to come and so that vendors can book and plan. The means to manage the market should be an online booking system and should eventually be managed by local volunteers of a constituted "Friends of" club with the incentive that any money made after expenses should be used to benefit the High Street area.

The goal of a new market on the Market Plain should always be for the betterment of the High Street area and to encourage community cohesion.

If this proposal is adopted by the AID committee as a viable way forward, then it is suggested that the Market Working group get together to establish with detailed guidance and that a goal of having all work completed by June 10 so that a market can be advertised for June 22.

Actions

- 1- Go to the Market and measure the place and create a site map where the stalls should go.
- 2- Get the info in from Suffolk Highways and the ESC about restrictions, etc.
- 3- Set up an Eventbrite account and make sure it will do the job we want. If not, find another booking system.

4- Get the Council to approve the working group recommendations to proceed.

5- Create the management framework.

- Set fees

- Set days and hours

- Set rules and regs (Insurance, refunds, etc.)

6- Create flyers and post them

7- Set a Rota for councillors to be at the market for the first three months.

8- Approach the High Street residents group about running the market in return for a say in how the fees are spent on High Street. If this won't work, find a local manager for the market such as OMG productions or an individual who will manage it for a cut of the fees.