

Honiton Town Council have made it one of its top priorities to improve the regular street market. The market, which is currently held on Tuesdays and Saturdays, was granted a Royal Charter in 1257 and has been held in the High Street ever since.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the market has seen a decline in the number and variety of traders and the Council want to try and revive it again, bringing it back to being a vibrant and interesting attraction for locals and tourists alike.

However, there are some problems to overcome. Until a couple of years ago stalls were allowed to utilise that area of the High Street adjacent to the old Post Office, but following the publication of a health and safety report commissioned by the Council it was deemed unsafe to allocate stalls to pitches there; they were therefore moved to the broader part of the High Street, west of the junction with New Street.

Due to the existence of natural breaks in this part of the town, however, such as access alleys to the rear of shops, a pedestrian crossing and bus stops, which break up the run of stalls, the appearance is not so much a market, more a random selection of traders. In order to counter this the Council has purchased a number of gazebos, which traders without one will be asked to use, and this will hopefully give a better impression of a market to potential buyers.

New traders have been attracted to the market, but the lack of footfall has meant they don't return and the market therefore relies on the handful of regular traders to keep the market going. The Market Superintendent tries to persuade the new traders to stay and help the Council to build up the market again, but the minimal trading they manage to do discourages them.

The Council has introduced a regular craft market element to the markets on the last Saturday of each month and it is hoped this will encourage more people to attend; the next one of these will be on Saturday, 26th October. They are also wanting to reintroduce a farmers' market, but again it has been difficult to attract traders, so if you know of anyone who might be interested in selling produce the Council would be pleased to hear from you. They are also considering other specialist markets to encourage people to come into town and see what is on offer.

Councillor Rob Sexton, who is the Chair of the Council's Market Working Group, says "Our message to the people of Honiton and its surrounding villages is a simple one – do you want our regular street market to thrive? If the answer to that question is Yes, we are imploring you to come into town and give it a better level of support. The more people who buy goods from the traders the more the market will flourish and attract new traders, who will then be willing to come back and give it another go, possibly becoming regulars in the process. We are doing our best to make the market more attractive, and we hope you will start to see a difference very soon, but if there are no buyers the traders simply will not stay.

"The town has already seen many of its shops close due to lack of trading, and whilst there are some new retailers willing to open up and take a chance, too many of the shops in the town are now empty and we don't want the market to go the same way. The council is hoping to launch a 'shop local' scheme in the near future, intended to encourage residents in the area to use their local traders, but that will take a commitment by the people of Honiton to support them".

If you have any queries, or any suggestions about how the market could be improved, the Council would be pleased to hear from you. Councillor Sexton can be contacted on [robertsexton@honiton.gov.uk](mailto:robertsexton@honiton.gov.uk).