

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2023
title: CLITHEROE FOOD FESTIVAL
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
principal author: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the Clitheroe Food Festival

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Corporate Objectives
 - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
- Community Ambitions-
 - Provide an opportunity for local businesses to develop their market share with exposure to new consumers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The 2022 food festival was staged on Saturday, 30 July 2022, and around 100 businesses and organisations attended. In size it was as large as the 2019 event, with even more entertainment this year.

2.2 At the meeting of this Committee in November 2022 it was agreed to hold the food festival again this year on the weekend of 12th August 2023 with consideration of how the festival looks this year to be brought back to the Committee.

3 OPTIONS

3.1 Various options have been considered by Officers as follows.

One day food festival (same format as previous years)

3.2 The food festival has, to date, been successful as a one-day event held on a Saturday in summer. Attendance numbers has grown through the years and visitors, vendors, businesses and residents have a certain level of expectation in terms of the festival look and offer.

3.3 Members may choose to follow the same format as previous years to not only provide a festival which people have come to expect and has proven popular but to reduce disruption to our businesses and residents by extending road closures to enable a longer festival.

3.4 There are associated challenges with the current food festival format as set out within the previous report particularly the unknowns of a free event in respect of visitor numbers (with the associated health and safety implications) and recuing interest from staff to assist with the event (as it is a very long day).

Extend the festival to two days (Saturday and Sunday)

3.5 Given the popularity of the event this is another option however this would involve:

3.5.1 Greater costs associated with hiring equipment, security (during the hours the stalls are closed), staff costs, park and ride facilities

3.5.2 Longer road closure periods with the associated disruption to residents and businesses

3.6 The above costs associated with last years festival were as follows:

Staffing Costs Before, During and After the Event= £5,213

Marquees, Stalls and Staging for Town Centre Entertainment= £11,124

Portable Toilets = £800

Park and Ride Facilities= £1,128

Park and Ride Coach Hire = £5,000

Hire of Van= £127

On Street Entertainment= £4,364

Two Way Radios for on the Festival Day= £272

First Aid Provision= £1,880

Festival Site Security= £2,814

Traffic Management Signage and Coning= £5,125

Temporary Road Closure= £809

3.7 Working on the assumption that a number of these costs would double (with some costs likely to more than double particularly security requirements) for a two-day event there is currently insufficient budget allocated to the food festival.

3.8 Members should note that the date the event has relied to date on a substantial number of Council officers working to plan it and, on the day, to serve in various roles. There is a clear downward trend in the number of staff willing to work on the event and it could be challenging to staff a two-day event. Such an option may require the assistance of a professional event company to manage the event (as they will arrange for the event to be suitably staffed) however this would have an associated cost which is likely to be more than the current budget for this event.

3.9 Appendix 1 includes the feedback received from traders who attended the 2022 event. Of the 25 traders who provided feedback 16 consider that the event should be a one-day event and comments were received about the costs being high for the stalls (the costs would be higher for any trader who wished to attend for two days if the event ran over two days).

3.10 It is noted that a number of food festivals across the country are two+ day events and as such holding a two-day event would seek to replicate what appears to be successful elsewhere. However, it is important to note that a number of these events are:

3.10.1 Ticketed- charging for entry would seek to recoup some of the costs associated with running the event and could control numbers (the issue of safety was not a concern this year but needs to be a consideration in future years especially if the event is held during fine weather). However, to date the event has been free to attend and as such this would be a significant change which could deter attendance. Also based upon the current layout requiring a ticket would be challenging given the open nature of the town and the potential negative feedback from customers attending existing businesses (including the market) as opposed to wishing to attend the food festival

3.10.2 On private/ pedestrianised land- such an event does not have the associated road closures and potential disruption issues.

3.10.3 Ran by a private event company- such companies have a directory of traders, staff, marquees, security etc to draw upon which impacts on the cost effectiveness of a longer event.

3.11 It is also noted that for a two-day event in Clitheroe, which would be free to attend, this may not result in greater visitor numbers overall. People are likely to chose which day to attend based on the predicted weather and whether they intend to combine the visit with other businesses in Clitheroe/ visit the wider area, as opposed to visiting on both days.

The traders may not see any financial benefit from a two-day event with income spread over the two days as opposed to one and larger associated costs with the rental charges. Whilst it could be argued that a two-day event would enable more people to attend (such as people who usually work on Saturdays) the extent of this increase is an unknown at this stage.

3.12 The benefit of a two-day event is that could attract people for further afield with the associated economic benefits of visitors staying in the Borough and possible additional spend in pubs/ restaurants/ visitor attractions during their stay. However, Members will be aware that tourist accommodation within the Valley is extremely popular within the summer months and the attraction of a food festival is not essential for our visitor accommodation within the month of August. If a two-day event was preferred it would be important to undertake some research with our tourism businesses to establish the associated benefits to our tourism industry, such as where overnight visitors stayed/ dined given that this potentially could be out of Borough.

Hold a one-day food festival and a different offer on the Sunday

3.13 The food festival could be held on Saturday 12th August with a different offer held on Sunday 13th August. Such an option would enable the roads to be reopened following the Saturday event as would typically occur reducing disruption and would have to operate on the basis of a smaller Sunday offer, the nature of which would need to be considered.

3.14 The challenge in respect of this option is identifying what offer is provided on the Sunday. A beer/ gin festival would not be very dissimilar to the main Saturday event and would necessitate the need for some food offer as a wholly drinks festival could bring disturbance challenges within the town.

3.15 The main challenge with this is the expectation from people visiting the event. Notwithstanding how this event is promoted/ advertised it is likely that visitors and traders would expect the same offer on both days and there could be resultant negativity in respect of a smaller different offer on the Sunday. This was experienced in Clitheroe in respect of the Christmas markets as notwithstanding the fact that the event was advertised as a small-scale event, which was also reflected in the price to rent the stalls, some of the traders expected the same level of footfall as the food festival.

3.16 There would also potentially be associated security requirements dependent on the nature of the offer provided on the Sunday. For example, cask ale traders would need to deliver the casks on the Saturday to allow them to sit for the required period of time so the stalls retained overnight to facilitate the Sunday offer would need to be secured.

3.17 Currently not all of the shops within Clitheroe open on a Sunday, including the market, with the town being quieter. Whilst some may choose to open if an event was planned the offer in the town would be different than that on the Saturday. This could impact on the attractiveness of the event for traders and visitors alike.

Relocate the food festival

3.18 As set out above a lot of the events held country wide, which run for more than one day, are held on private land. There are such options within the Valley which could enable the festival to be held for a longer period as some of the town centre challenges listed above would be removed.

3.19 One option, which would retain the festival in Clitheroe, would be to host the festival on the recreation ground at Clitheroe Castle. This land is owned by the Council and has hosted fun fairs in the past. This land is accessible by relatively flat paths and is vehicle free.

- 3.20 Such an option would include the erection of a marquee/ marquees on the land with provision for clear pedestrian access (poor weather on the run up to the festival is a consideration given the land is laid to grass). The marquees would be set up by the company sourced to supply them and logistical matters, such as electric hook ups, would be managed depending on the needs of the traders.
- 3.21 This option would enable the event to be ticketed and whilst it is not proposed to charge for tickets this would enable visitor numbers to be controlled (visitors would have a time slot when purchasing their free ticket) which addresses concerns raised previously about the numbers of visitors in the town and would enable the traders to plan their stock accordingly based on ticket sales in advance of the event.
- 3.22 Citing the event in the castle grounds also makes security matters slightly easier due to the locational aspects of all the stalls in one area away from public vehicular highways.
- 3.23 Such an option would enable the roads and car parks within the town to remain open and could be ran in conjunction with other events at the castle and/ or with the businesses throughout the town increasing the attraction of the event to visitors.
- 3.24 This option would however take the event slightly out of the main area of the town which is not what visitors who have attended the event in past years may expect. It is noted that a number of the town centre businesses, such as Cowmans, Stansfields, Exchange Coffee, Chocolate Works, D Byrnes, Violets Deli, Ale House, Beer Shack etc take up positions right outside their premises and benefit from custom on the day of the festival. Such businesses may be less inclined to take up a stall if the festival was relocated.

Relocate the food festival out of Clitheroe

3.25 Expanding on from the suggestion above the food festival could be relocated out of Clitheroe altogether. This would be a completely different offer to previous years and if this option is one that Members would like to explore it is recommended that the festival is renamed 'Ribble Valley Food Festival'.

3.26 Possible options include:

- 3.26.1 Longridge Showground
- 3.26.2 Chipping Showground
- 3.26.3 Royal Lancashire Showground

3.27 Obviously, this option would require discussions with the landowners and whilst the event would still be ran by Ribble Valley Council close liaison with the land owners/ their event organisers would be essential. Such an option could be run as a free ticketed event to control numbers from a health and safety perspective but has more potential to be a longer event than an event which remains within the town.

3.28 This brings about similar challenges as relocating the festival to the castle grounds in terms of moving away from what people expect and reducing the benefit the festival brings to town centre businesses. Additionally, it is not clear at this stage whether an alternative site would be available as summer events will already have been booked.

Ribble Valley Taste Fest

3.29 Another option would be to have Clitheroe Food Festival as the cumulation of a series of smaller satellite events around the Valley in the week running up to the festival.

3.30 The Council's Tourism Officer has discussed possible options with private businesses. The purpose is to build on the success of the Clitheroe Food Festival and spread the benefits of food and drink promotion across Ribble Valley, by creating a weeklong celebration called 'Ribble Valley Taste Fest'

3.31 Events would be hosted at various locations, with each host controlling bookings for each individual event, thus minimising the involvement of Council administration.

3.32 Promotion would be at two levels, primarily as part of a weeklong celebrations, promoted by the Council, and secondarily, by each participating venue using their established marketing channels. This would maximise the marketing potential by using numerous social media platforms which would then channel traffic to the overall website run by the Council.

3.33 Interest has already been expressed in hosting the following

- A daily Walk with Taste, each a different circular walk concluding with a set or themed meal at participating venues
- A Cheese Fest at Chipping, involving a food related walk, with cheese making demonstrations, tasting, and concluding with cheese themed meal.
- Farm visits - conducted tours at three farms
- Brewery tour and Beer tasting
- Gin and wine demonstrations and tasting
- The climax of the week would be the established Clitheroe Food Festival

3.34 The Ribble Valley Taste Fest could look like this -

Date	Event	Location	Public No's	Businesses involved
Saturday	Walk with Taste Farm Walk (Sheep)	Sawley	25	1
		Chipping	30	1
Sunday	Walk with Taste Wine Fest	Waddington	25	1
		Whalley	30	2
Monday	Walk with Taste Cheese Fest	Ribchester	25	2
		Chipping	50	4
Tuesday	Walk with Taste Farm Walk	Mitton	25	1
		Gisburn	30	1
Wednesday	Walk with Taste Gin Fest – Demo / Tasting	Worston	25	1
		Longridge	30	1
Thursday	Walk with Taste Farm Walk	Billington	25	1
		Dutton	30	2
Friday	Walk with Taste Beer Fest - Tour and tasting	Whitewell	25	1
		Clitheroe	50	1
			425	20
Saturday	Food Festival	Clitheroe	?	?

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources**- At the time of setting the 2022/23 budget, this committee agreed to the inclusion of the net cost of holding the Clitheroe Food Festival within the Council's base budget, £22,610 and this level of budget will be carried forward with inflation and adjustments for known movements in costs and income for the 2023 event. The Council holds an earmarked reserve for the purpose of supporting the net cost of the event, although funds have diminished in recent years.

- The festival is free to attend, with income principally obtained from stall holder fees. Being free to visitors, it cannot generate sufficient income to cover the cost of staging it.
- **Technical, Environmental and Legal-** The issue of safety is a consideration especially if the event is held during fine weather. Because it is free to attend no tickets are sold and therefore predictions of crowd density cannot be made in advance, although provision for crowd safety must be made.
- **Political-** Members are asked to consider whether this event should remain as Clitheroe Food Festival or a wider Ribble Valley event.
- **Reputation-** The 2022 Festival was a well-run event which enhances the Council's reputation. The general feedback from attendees was very positive, despite the weather.
- **Equality & Diversity –** The location of the festival will ensure accessibility for all

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Officers recommend that the Ribble Valley Taste Fest option is the preferable choice for moving the food festival forward and expanding the festival out to the whole of the Borough. The food festival will conclude the week of events on Saturday 12th August following the same format as previous years. Members are asked to confirm whether they agree to this recommendation and instruct Members to make the necessary preparations for this event.

NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

APPENDIX 1- FOOD FESTIVAL FEEDBACK 2022

Clitheroe Food Festival Feedback Form

Responses

We received 25 responses from traders

Q1: Rate the success of the event (1: Not Successful; 10 Very Successful)

- 13 (52%) scored the event 10
- 6 (24%) scored the event 9
- 4 (16%) scored the event 8
- 1 (4%) scored the event 7
- 1 (4%) scored the event 6

Q2: Describe what you thought worked well

Key themes

- Organisation- traffic flow, timings, loadout/breakdown
- The Layout of stalls/ location
- Good Footfall
- Helpful Volunteers

Q3: Describe what requires improvement

Key themes

- Social media marketing- needs to start well in advance of the festival date
- Event owl payment glitches
- Arrival signage and signage for bullring/market areas
- Later finish time
- Price- expensive, particularly for those trading alcohol
- Standard of the marquees were not as good as previous years

Q4: What were your goals for the event and did you meet them?

Main responses

- Brand exposure/awareness
- Sales/profit
- Most responses said they had achieved their sales targets and showcased their products to a wider audience.

Q5: How was your experience using Event Owl

Very mixed responses...

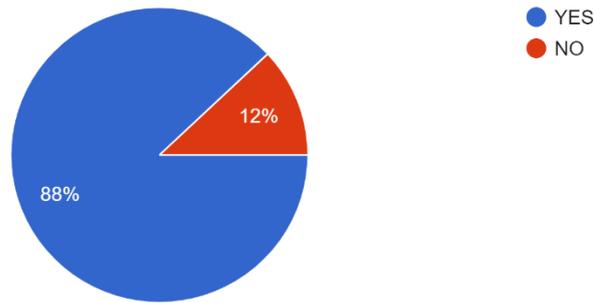
- There were answers such as good, excellent, ok, fine, and smooth
- Conversely there were responses such as glitchy, pain ITA, terrible, very poor

The main issue was that many payments were not going through due to the 3D authentication updates. The advice Event Owl gave us was to tell traders to contact their bank and that's as far as the advice went. This led to us having to continuously chase payments.

Q6:

Were the Exhibitor Packs we sent out useful?

25 responses



Q7: How could the Exhibitor Packs be improved?

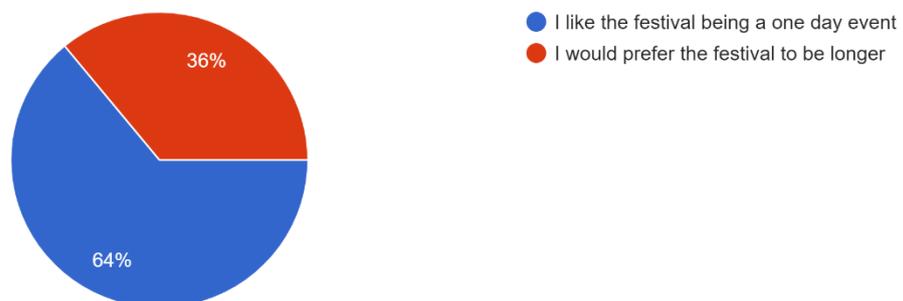
Key themes

- Send out earlier
- Send out via email
- Have a more transparent contacts list included- who to contact on the day, for website info, for parking info etc.
- Send out the advertisement flyers earlier to be distributed at other events

Q8:

Do you like the Clitheroe Food Festival being a one day event or would you prefer it to be longer?

25 responses



Q9:

Do you want to be contacted when we start taking bookings for the next Clitheroe Food Festival?

25 responses

