Malmesbury Town Centre PRIORITIES Action Plan; 2015 and beyond

Prepared for Malmesbury Town Team; January 2015

Action Plan Background and Introduction

The actions identified in this Action Plan follow a programme of detailed research, consultation and assessment completed in the summer and autumn of 2014.

The research included surveys of consumers, town centre operators and other local stakeholders as well as objective assessments of the current offer, town centre experience, nearby competing locations and a review of future industry and consumer trends.

It is clear that while Malmesbury is a successful town, there are a number of issues that are potentially limiting performance and many opportunities to improve performance for the future. The actions detailed in the Action Plan reflect the wide variety of research completed and have sought to identify a range of initiatives to help direct Malmesbury towards ongoing prosperity in the years to come.

For ease of reference the actions are grouped under the following broad **Action Areas**.

- Customer Experience
- Retail
- Events
- Marketing and Promotions
- Business Support.

For each Action Area *priority actions* have been identified. These priority actions have been identified and agreed as a result of detailed analysis of the research and ongoing involvement with the Town Team. These priority actions are not just the 'must do' things, but include actions that can be implemented quickly and relatively easily taking into consideration skills and resources available.

A further group of *mid to long term actions* have also been identified and are those that will require a planned implementation by the Town Team over a longer 6-24 month period.

The Town Team will need to allocate actions to 'Owners' to ensure and manage the delivery and / or implementation. Some actions are interlinked and therefore an action topic might be referenced in more than one action area.

Wherever possible, relevant examples to support the various actions listed in the Action Plan have been provided separately. The findings and report presentations provided to the Town Team as part of this project also include valuable background and reference material to support and assist the implementation of many of the identified actions.

This document contains the PRIORITY actions only. The FULL action plan contains both, the priority actions and the wider range of mid / longer term actions.

Action Area: Customer Experience

Objective: Make visiting Malmesbury easy and rewarding for the customer; address any perceived 'barriers' and ensure the customer experience meets customers' needs and strives to exceed them

4 Agreed Priority Actions;   **Shopping Guide**
Parking
Signage
Public Toilets

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Design and produce a dedicated **Shopping Guide** - 'Visit Malmesbury'	• Detail trading hours, offer, plan / map, car parks, toilets, visiting markets, visit trails, etc. • Available as hard copy leaflet and via website downloads and online • Print as large maps (possibly sponsored by retailers) install in all car parks, high visit locations, Market Cross, leisure centre, etc. • Distribute leaflets to homes and major employers • Use QR code on maps for download facility
• Deliver an improved **parking** experience for town centre users, in particular address perceptions of availability and cost; parking was a priority issue identified in the research findings	• Review and deliver improved signage to existing town centre car parks; on arrival from main routes, signage to Cross Hayes and other parking facilities • Promote a variety of parking options, including 'long stay'/shopper and Waitrose car park • Work with Waitrose to generate greater usage of their car park for town centre visitors; add signage / map for town centre at steps as well as in store, add Town Centre 'arrow signs' in particular at the steps • Participate in the existing parking and costing structure review to provide the town's views and opinions; with clear objectives being to encourage visits, both more visits and longer stays, opportunities for free short stay parking and a parking cost structure that encourages a longer stay • Promote the number of 'available' shopper parking spaces via signage on arrival • Re-name long stay parking 'Shopper / Visitor Parking' • Encourage higher usage of long stay car parks; better signage, appealing pricing structure, clearly marked pedestrian route from car park to shopping / town centre, install shopper maps • Re-route the town buses to include linkage to long stay parking and Waitrose, review timetable (frequency / times)

Action Area: Customer Experience contd.

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Review existing town centre signage and deliver **signage** that sets the 'tone' for the quality positioning of the town and that welcomes, 'directs to' and promotes the town centre	• Remove all poor quality signs and all 'negative' instruction signs, e.g. 'do not park bikes…' turn into 'please use bike parking facilities at…' • Identify opportunities and locations for improved signage; welcome signage, information signage, directional and promotion / event signage • Signage locations to include signs on all approach roads, welcome signage in the car park, shopper guides and maps and locations of information points • Ensure that signage is consistent with and reflects the 'virtual' signposting used on line / on the website in terms of style and content. This may need professional support • Signage to clearly promote Malmesbury's brand / identity and the town centre offer; what's on, where, what's new, what's coming; what's promoted? Example cylinder style display which can be updated, visible to people on arrival (i.e. in car park) and message board in Tourist Information Centre. • See TRG Tachbrook Street Signage Strategy for input, direction and visual examples
• Improve the existing **public toilets** provision; clearly promoted town centre public toilets - open, free, clean and easily accessible	• Improve signage to and quality of existing facilities • Identify opportunities to install new facilities • Review opportunities to promote facilities within established providers; pubs, restaurants, etc. a scheme whereby town centre F&B operators make their toilets available for non-customers (adopted widely in London) – to form part of the town's Customer Service Charter • Agree Customer Service Charter with retailers; publish on website • Install high quality temporary event facilities during main town events

Action Area: **Retail**

Objective: Ensure Malmesbury's retail offer appeals to, satisfies, and strives to exceed the needs and requirements of its current, future and potential customer base and embraces all new opportunities

5 Agreed Priority Actions;   **Windows**
                                                 Markets
                                                 Opening Times
                                                 Event Guide
                                                 Digital Opportunities

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Improve the impact of the retail offer through improved window displays and use of **windows**	• Encourage more eye-catching, higher impact window displays • Provide training and specialist support to retailers, workshops and master classes; see TRG Retail Skills examples • Discuss fascia / frontage refurbishment grants with Council • Promote 'seasonal' themed opportunities via Town Team newsletter • Work with local colleges; students to work with local retailers for work experience, original ideas and a 'local ' dimension (shared benefits and PR opportunities) • Offer seasonal prizes; local businesses to sponsor awards / prizes • Themed displays for the whole town, can also become an event (e.g. East Grinstead example, 'The Big Reveal') • Encourage retailers to use non-retail frontages as extra window opportunities
• Build on and improve the existing **markets** offer; create a *new* Town Centre Markets offer (plural!)	• Assess existing markets offer, including the indoor Town Hall offer - Is it fit for purpose? How can it be improved? • Establish regular, fortnightly and themed markets • Use established market operators to provide and deliver a quality markets offer • Use all of Market Cross and Town Hall area of Cross Hayes • Contact Paul Lewis of SMC markets (TRG to provide)
• Encourage consistent and extended **opening hours** in the town centre	• Share the research with operators; customer feedback and their requirements highlights a clear opportunity • Work with those that have differing opening times to see if a solution can be found to enable them to adopt more consistent and longer opening hours

Action Area: Retail contd.

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to…)
• Provide an **events guide** for town centre operators to highlight the opportunities offered by events visitors	• A guide to *'Making the most of event customers'* • 'How to…' checklist for retailers and town businesses • Illustrate ways in which they can tap into this additional, and often sizeable, customer base
• Identify and implement ways to embrace **digital opportunities** across the town centre	• Identify opportunities for 'click and collection points' in the town centre for online orders, via existing operators or using vacant units, etc. • Identify other opportunities to provide additional customer facilities, including collection points, shop and drop points, priority parking, home delivery, etc. • Offer workshop and / or training for retailers to share the findings of the research and the opportunities for town centres, represented by changes in shopping patterns and behaviour, in relation to the digital revolution • Work with retailers through training and grant initiatives to enable them to benefit from these omni-channel retail opportunities; grants for websites, etc.

Action Area: **Events**

Objective: Make it easy for events to happen and benefit the town; embrace, optimise and grow the events offer

4 Agreed Priority Actions; **Events Calendar**
Organisers Guide
Food Festival
Event Signage

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Plan and manage current 'Events' activity with a clear **Events Calendar**	• Prepare a calendar / schedule of all existing, known regular events; identify who they appeal to and identify any gaps or clashes in terms of a) dates / periods and b) type of target customers • See TRG Blackburn Marketing Plan for example calendar • Share calendar with local retailers to enable them to plan for and tap into all the events opportunities • Plan events to ensure variety in terms of time of day for events as well as varying the location of events; events in your *'area',* holding events in different spaces • Nominate, if possible, a single point of contact for events to direct organisers to appropriate sources of information and support
• Create an **Organiser's Guide** for Events - 'Events in Malmesbury Guide'	• A 'how to' guide for event organisers • An events information pack for event organisers to include key points of contact and other key aspects, particularly; local business support, local customer promotion and marketing, local staff recruitment, etc. • Ask event organisers for specific feedback and reviews to provide input to future guides and for news stories • Dedicated online web space and guide

Action Area: Events

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Develop a new Malmesbury **Food Festival** event to target established and agreed opportunities	• Include and promote local businesses, local producers and regional suppliers • Consider using the experience of a professional event organiser to help with the first year or two • The Food Festival can be in multiple places across the town / borough and themed as a single event • Initially a new event will need seed funding, however by year 3 it should be profit generating for the operator and host location • Tie into a recognised local seasonal opportunity – food / produce; examples in other locations Apples in autumn, Asparagus in May / June, Rhubarb in spring...
• Identify locations in the town centre for physical **event signage** to promote upcoming events	• Design and produce new physical signage to promote upcoming events for the town • Include supporting leaflets and web activity; upcoming events should be on the town web site home page • Posters in retailers windows should be considered supplementary promotion supporting other primary physical town centre promotion activity • Plan in as part of signage review

Action Area: Marketing and Promotions

Objective: Market and promote Malmesbury to a wide range of potential consumers; spread the word to the right target audiences (new and old) using the right messages

4 Agreed Priority Actions;   **Malmesbury Identity**
Marketing Information Pack
General Promotion Leaflet (This is Malmesbury)
Loyalty Programme

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Clearly define the **'Malmesbury Identity'** and actively promote this and Malmesbury's many unique attributes	• Work with an experienced brand identity design practice • Identify and agree 'core' Malmesbury attributes (see example TRG Attributes Diagrams); aim is to build a sense of place, identifying clearly 'what' Malmesbury is known for and has to offer. Use the various identified 'Strengths' from all the areas of research to help with listing the attributes • Use and promote these attributes and identified unique selling points; cycling, walking, local produce, small town, philosophy town, 'thinking', history, food, festival / event town in promotional material and when talking about / referring to the town • Revisit the town centre logo and add a strap line(s) that reflect this identity and use on websites and promotional material • Consider a town centre strap line (and design) that can be used with *different* unique selling points and attributes, e.g. Malmesbury, great for …walking; …history; …local products…eating out, …a day out. "Malmesbury; it's more than you think" • Where appropriate use the brand logo and strap lines on signage and collateral material to create a consistent brand identity • Work with Waitrose as a marketing partner to promote the town centre; in-store, car park, etc. For example Town Centre Directories in store and car park, top of steps, etc. (as detailed in Customer Experience)

Action Area: **Marketing and Promotions** contd.

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Create a **Marketing Information Pack** for local retailers and businesses	• For use by the Town Team and to share with retailers and businesses • Include customer insight information for target customer groups as part of this Marketing Information Pack • Identify appropriate 'messages' for each customer type and appropriate Malmesbury 'attributes' (reasons to visit); promote these messages and attributes to target consumers • See TRG Blackburn for example 'Customer Identikits'
• Design and produce a general promotional leaflet; *This is Malmesbury*	• Work with providers of existing Malmesbury Guides to provide input on content and direction • Target a wide range of activities to a broad user group, i.e. not just 'Walker's Guide', but one that includes the wide variety of what Malmesbury has to offer; shopping, eating, walking, cycling • Distribute these via as many nearby venues in the wider area as possible, inside and outside of the catchment area • Develop a simple printed summary leaflet about the town centre and what it offers
• Develop / trial a **Loyalty Card** programme	• Reward local, loyal shoppers and generate more frequent visits

Action Area: Business Support

Objective: Share information and work together with local businesses and other stakeholders in a collaborative way. Provide a variety of support to both existing and new businesses to optimise opportunities and secure future growth

4 Agreed Priority Actions;   **Business Advice**
                                      Workshops and Training
                                      Newsletter
                                      Grant funding

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Provide **business advice** and support materials to local retailers and businesses	• Create 'Fast Facts' business pack; Fast fact summaries on key topics; see TRG Aylesbury example • Provide all retailers with a summary of the Customer Profile Research to identify and highlight the core customer groups and customer needs; see TRG identikit example from Blackburn • Develop and share this Malmesbury customer insight with operators as input to their own marketing, promotion and product development / range planning, develop the 'Customer Identikits' summary (as detailed in Marketing and Promotions) • Create a Promotions Checklist to include planning, marketing and implementing a promotion and relevant / useful contacts; see TRG example from 'How to Implement a Successful Promotion' training • Work with retailers to ensure their business can, and is, adapting to changing consumer needs and shopping behaviour, e.g. offering exemplar service and opportunities to tap into the digital age • Identify and offer a range of other appropriate business support, e.g. business reviews and analysis
• Offer a series of **workshops and training** to provide education and skills development training for local retailers and businesses	• Develop and offer workshops and training, as a series of Retail Master Classes; 'How to...' workshops on a variety of topics, from product range development to store layout and marketing, e.g. 1) How to use customer insight information 2) How to improve performance 3) Customer Service 4) Exterior impact

Action Area: Business Support contd.

Priority Actions	Implementation Guidance (How to...)
• Develop a Town Team **newsletter** for on-going information sharing and communication	• Provide planned regular feedback to retailers on news, initiatives and actions, via newsletter as well as via website and social media, include reporting of 'collective' town centre performance and improvements • Develop a 'What's happening this week / this month' style news bulletin • Possibly include performance indexing of non confidential KPIs • Engage with 'interested' parties – follow up with the 16 operators identified via the Operators Survey as a priority
• Identify and share opportunities for additional **grant funding** and other shared funding / finance initiatives with retailers	• Contact local, regional and national authorities to identify a variety of grant opportunities; then provide guidance on how to apply for:- • Shop fit and maintenance grants • Training and skills development grants • Apprenticeship / work experience opportunities and schemes